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Growing up in Working-class London Between The Wars

By
William Frederick Giles BA BSc MA

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
University of Kent at Canterbury
December 2002

No part of this has previously been submitted for a degree or other qualification of the University of Kent or any other University or institution except where stated. The author alone, under the supervision as noted below has prepared this work.

Supervisor
Professor H St.C Cunningham

103,669 Words

Growing up in Working-class London Between the wars

A Thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Kent

By

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F185341

Growing up in Working-class London Between the Wars

Abstract

This is a study of working-class childhood in the London of the inter-war period. Using a mixture of official records, oral testimony, and autobiography it seeks to explore the experiences of growing up in a working-class family between the wars; showing how this experience differed from that of their parents generation.

To achieve this aim the thesis looks at five areas of children's lives to discover what, if any, changes had taken place after the Great War. Starting with home life the thesis asks whether children of the inter-war period lived in better housing conditions than their forbears. It seeks to discover how much impact technological advances like the development of broadcast radio and domestic electrification had on working-class children's lives. It goes on to look at education asking what effect changes in the structure of the education system and in teaching methods had on working-class children's school experiences and educational opportunities. The thesis then looks at the development of the Schools Medical, Meals and Welfare Services asking what impact these made. From here the thesis seeks to explore the world of children's play, asking what sorts of games children play and how they were affected by the introduction of new media like radio and more importantly film. The attempts by those in authority be they parents, teachers, social reformers or representatives of government departments to control children's play are also examined to discover their motivations and to assess their success. Finally the thesis looks briefly at the world of school children's employment showing how due to a combination of complacency, lack of effort and ignorance government attempts to eliminate or even to adequately control child labour failed. Most importantly however, this thesis is about working-class children and their experiences while growing up in London between the wars.

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I should like to start by thank all of those people without whose memories this work could not have been possible the contributors. I should also like to thank The London Borough of Tower Hamlets and in particular the staff and clients of the Aspen Way, Southern Grove and Russia Lane Day Care Centres for their help and patience. I wish also to express my gratitude for all the help and support of Age Concern (Westminster) and in particular to everybody at the, Covent Garden and Soho Day Care Centres and a special thank you to the members of the St Jude's Lunch Club where I would heartily recommend the sausage and chips.

I should also like to thank the staff and the chief archivist of London Metropolitan Archive for their help and for allowing me access to some of their restricted files. In the sane vein I should like to thank the archive staff at the London School of Economics for allowing me access to the original street survey enquiry cards and records of the *New Survey of London Life and Labour.* The same thank you is also due to the library staff and the archivist of the Institute of Education for allowing me access to the records of the National Union of Women Teachers. I would like to express my special thanks to Mr Keith Brooham archivist of the Children's Country Holiday Fund for his help and for permission to reproduce some of the documents and pictures from their files.

I would like to say a special thank you to Miss Gill Sinclair and Mr David Latham both for their proof reading and their useful suggestions. To Mrs Jackie Waller, Mrs Sian Dixon, and Mrs Elaine Gilman of the History Office at the University of Kent at Canterbury for providing an inexhaustible supply of coffee and biscuits when the going got tough; and finally to my mother for all her efforts in reading and correcting the final draft.

Finally I would like express my special thanks and gratitude to the man without whose courage in being prepared to see somebody who wrote to him out of the blue with some vague ideas for a research project and was then brave, or daft, enough to agree to take on the project. A man who has had to cope with all the horrors of my spelling, my complete inability to write footnotes and my terrible punctuation!!!! I am of course referring to my supervisor Professor Hugh St C Cunningham without whose patience and kind and gentle advice and guidance this thesis would never have been written. Thanks Hugh you will never know how important this was to me.

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Introduction

It has been said that 'the past is another country.' If this is true then this thesis seeks to enter what is perhaps the most familiar, and yet at the same time the most foreign country of all, the land of childhood. It is the most familiar because it is the one part of the past that we have all inevitably visited; but it is also the most foreign for once we have left it we can never return. It is the aim of this thesis to go back to one particular part of this land, to discover what it was like to be a child at a time that is often portrayed as part of a long golden summer of peace between two devastating wars. We will explore this familiar, yet so foreign, land to attempt to discover what outside influences were shaping the experience of childhood at this time. We will ask how this lost world of inter-war childhood differed from that before the First, and to a much lesser extent, after the Second World Wars.

Thanks to the Education Acts of both 1918 and 1921 working-class children seem to have gained access to new educational opportunities, while changes in the methods of teacher training and higher expenditure on both education and child welfare provision supposedly led to changes in the classroom, with smaller class sizes and improvements in children's health and nutrition. Legislation had also apparently brought an end to children's employment, which in turn meant that working-class children had more time to play, while the development of mass production in the toy industry meant that they had access to a range of cheap toys. The coming of paid summer holidays for some workers and the invention of the motorcar and motorbus or charabanc gave working-class children the opportunity to experience seaside holidays, country picnics and a never-ending round of fun and adventure. This is a beautiful picture but is it true? How effective was government action in curbing child labour and did working-class children really have access to better education and welfare facilities? What was it really like for the vast majority of working-class children who grew up in the towns and cities of Britain in the years between the two World Wars? How did their experience of childhood compare with that of the generation that had grown up in the Edwardian era that preceded the First World War? These are the questions that this study sets out to explore.

This study looks at the experience of growing up in working-class London during the inter-war period. Why choose London and not Birmingham or Manchester, or Newcastle? There are several reasons for this. Firstly London has a good range of

easily accessible written records upon which to base the study. Secondly it is within easy travelling distance to the university in which I am working and so is convenient for research. Thirdly it is the intention that this study be a follow-up to the work on London of Anna Davin whose study of working-class childhood was the inspiration for this work and upon which it is loosely based;[1] and finally London was the city in which I was born and brought up and so is the place that I know best.

In 1928 researchers at the London School of Economics, under the direction of Professor Hubert Llewellyn- Smith, set out to repeat the survey of *London Life and Labour* conducted by Charles Booth some forty years earlier. Their aim, according to Llewellyn-Smith who had himself worked on Booth's survey, was to use it as '*a basis for answering the insistent questions which are on all men's minds. In which direction are we moving? Is poverty diminishing or increasing? Are the conditions of life and labour becoming better or worse?*'[2] The resulting survey showed, as I am sure they hoped it would, that generally the life of the working class had improved in the intervening forty years. Published as the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* between 1929 and 1934, despite its flaws, and there are many, it provides a snapshot of life in the capital in the middle of what was later to become known as the inter-war period.[3] As such it forms one of the keystones of this study and is referred to throughout. This study also relies on the records of the London County Council, the Board of Education, Ministry of Labour, and Home Office

There have been numerous studies of the inter-war period looking at the various financial crises and particularly the great depression of the early thirties. The issues surrounding the rise of Hitler and Nazi Germany, and Britain's appeasement policies, have aroused so much interest that fears have been expressed in the media that these issues are coming to dominate the teaching of history in our schools and at undergraduate level in our universities. So why should there be another study of a period which is already so well documented? The answer is that there is still one area of both academic historical research and popular history which has hardly touched this period, that is the history of childhood and in particular the history of the working- class child.

[1] Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London 1996)
[2] Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales & Kathryn Kish Sklar (ed), *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective 1880-1940* (Cambridge 1991) p 211
[3] Ibid. pp 209-213

It would seem from a study of both popular culture and historical writing that the working-class child almost ceased to exist during this period. There were, of course, many books written both for and about children at this time, but most tended to feature the middle or upper-class child. For the newly servantless middle-class parents there were the new child care instruction manuals produced by experts like the New Zealand born Sir Frederick Truby King, which told them in great detail how to rear their offspring.[4] For children there were the books containing tales of folk heroes like Robin Hood, and The Knights of the Round Table, war and adventure stories, mysteries, fairy tales and a whole genre of school stories focusing on boarding school life, with midnight feasts and jolly japes in the dorm. Many popular stories featured the new technologies of the time, the use of radios and, in particular, aeroplanes featuring strongly. Amongst all of these writings, however, there would seem nowhere to have been anything that reflected the life experiences of the ordinary working-class child.

From the historical perspective, the life of the working-class child has been very well documented up to about the outbreak of the First World War, with books like Anna Davin's *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914,* which is a masterly study of working-class childhood in London between 1870 and 1914,[5] and James Walvin's *A Child's World,* which sets out to explore the experience of childhood from 1800 to 1914.[6]

The one area of childhood experience that has been very well documented for the inter-war period is education. Unfortunately, although there are many books on the history of education at this time, they are written either from the teachers' or officialdom's perspective; nowhere it seems has an attempt been made to document the experience of schooling from the perspective of the working-class child. The same can be said for the newly developing sub-branch of the history of education, which seeks to explore the development and work of the Education Welfare Services. In a recently published study of the child welfare service in London, Susan Williams and her co-authors provide a fascinating insight into the work of these valuable

[4] Frederick Truby King, *Feeding and Care of Baby* (New Zealand 1913)
[5] Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914*
[6] James Walvin, *A Child's World: A Social History of English Childhood 1800-1914* (London 1982)

organisations with almost no reference to the views of the children for whom the services were provided.[7]

Some authors have looked at this period either in passing, or as part of other work. Stephen Humphries, for example, has looked at this period in several works. In *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939,* he concentrates on the period before the First World War,[8] while in *A Man's World: From Boyhood to Manhood 1900-1960,* he deals with sixty years of boyhood in a single chapter![9] The experience of working-class childhood can also be found mentioned in several books looking at women's history particularly where they discuss the experience of motherhood, as it would obviously be difficult to look at this topic without some reference to children. Some good examples of this can be found in Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-class Women 1890-1940.*[10] Unfortunately, although saying that it goes up to 1940, much of this work is centred on women's and girls' experiences of life before the First World War. Carl Chinn's *They Worked All their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England 1880-1939,*[11] again in passing, provides us with tantalising glimpses of the experience of childhood in the inter-war period.

A good impression of the experience of pre-First World War childhood and motherhood can be found in Ellen Ross's book, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918* [12] and this, together with the work of Davin and others, is used to contrast the experience of working-class childhood in London before and after the Great War. There is also a considerable body of work looking at the experience of working-class childhood after the Second World War,[13] together with innumerable social studies on 'the teenage revolution' that, supposedly, took place in the early

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[7] A. Susan Williams, Patrick Ivin & Caroline Morse, *The Children of London: Attendance and Welfare at School 1870-1990* (London 2001)
[8] Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth 1889-1940* (Oxford 1981)
[9] Steve Humphries and Pamela Gordon, *A Man's World: From Boyhood to Manhood 1900-1960* (London1996)
[10] Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-class Women 1890-1939* (Oxford1984)
[11] Carl Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England 1880-1939* (Manchester 1988)
[12] Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London 1870-1918* (Oxford 1993)
[13] See for example Michael Young & Peter Willmott, *Family and Kinship in East London* (London 1957); John and Elizabeth Newson, *Four Years Old in an Urban Community* (London 1968); John and Elizabeth Newson, *Seven Years Old in the Home Environment* (London 1976)

1950s,[14] which would seem to reflect the growing concern at the time about the apparently anti-social activities of working-class youth. But studies of the experience of childhood and children in general for the inter-war period seem strangely lacking. I have discovered only two books, which actually look exclusively at the experience of the working-class child in the inter-war period. The first is David Fowler's study of the life style of young wage earners, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Inter-war Britain,*[15] in which he looks at the experience of what would later come to be called teenagers between the two World Wars. He argues that the first teenagers did not somehow appear out of nowhere after the Second World War, but that the apparent teenage revolution of the 1950s was, in fact, just a continuation of a process that had started in the 1920s, or even earlier; with young workers expressing their independence by attending organised dances and going to the cinema to watch films aimed at them. This is fine for older children but does not deal with those of school age. The second work is a recently published study of the history of child labour comprising a series of essays on the subject by authors from a range of disciplines,[16] in which Steve Cunningham gives an excellent, if somewhat brief, account of the prevalence and official denial of child labour between the wars. He discusses the apparently deliberate under-reporting of school-aged children's work, and the inter-departmental rivalry between the Ministry of Labour, Home Office and Board of Education with regard to the policing and control of juvenile employment.

There is a considerable body of contemporary work on childhood and youth during the inter-war period, most of it concentrating on the dangers of street gangs and the benefits to be gained from boys' clubs and youth organisations. There was also one landmark piece of legislation during this time, the Children Act 1933, which set out to reform the juvenile justice system. The few official reports that looked into various aspects of children's lives seem to be mainly self-congratulatory; like the 1924 inquiry into child labour, which appears to have been designed to show that the problem of child labour had been solved and that further legislation was

[14] For a discussion of the development of teenage culture in post war Britain see Bill Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford 1998)
[15] David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-earners in Interwar Britain* (London 1995)
[16] Michael Lavalette (Ed), *A Thing of the Past? Child Workers in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Liverpool 2000)

unnecessary.[17] Two major reports into the workings of the education system were published during this period, Hadow 1926 and Spens 1938; both focus on the administration and mechanics of the education system rather than on the lives of children for whom that education was being provided. This study sets out in a small way to fill this gap.

It is important at the outset to define what is meant here by the term 'child'. For the purposes of this study a child is being defined as a young person between the ages of five and fourteen years while an adolescent is somebody between the ages of fourteen and eighteen or twenty-one years depending on the circumstances. The reasoning behind this apparently quite arbitrary decision is that children below the age of five are generally considered to be infants and memories of childhood experiences below this age are normally only fragmentary at best. The upper age limit has been chosen because it is the upper age of childhood as defined in the 1908 Children Act and the Education Acts of 1918 and 1921, and would therefore seem to be a logical place at which to draw a dividing line between the child and both the adolescent and adult worlds.

It is also important to explain what is meant by the term 'working class'. As Joanna Bourke has pointed out working class can and often does mean different things to different people and indeed can be used and defined in a whole range of ways.[18] In the context of this thesis the term 'working class' is used to describe that mass of the population who earned their living through physical labour. On the whole I have based the criterion for class determination on that used by the *New Survey,* that is those who were generally employed in manual labour. [19] I have also like the authors of *the New Survey* included the children of foremen and small-scale self-employed tradesmen but have excluded those from the professional or employer classes.[20]

Although often seen as a great amorphous mass by both present day historians and the social surveyors of the time it is hoped that this thesis will show that there were many sub divisions within the working class.[21] It is will, for example, be shown

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[17] See Steve Cunningham in *A Thing of the Past* pp139-155

[18] Joanna Bourke, *Working-class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London 1994) pp 1-4

[19] See also Jay Winter (Ed), *The Working Class in Modern British Society: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge 1983)

[20] Thus the interviews with Frankie and Eric have been excluded (see appendix 3).

[21] The *New Survey* divided the working class into just four sub divisions the semi-criminal those living below Charles Booth's poverty line and

that both an individuals' and a family's position within society was not simply based, as in the New *Survey,* on fathers employment but was determined by a whole range of factors. One of the main factors was family size for obviously it was more difficult for a large family to live on the same income as a small family. There were less obvious divisions, for example, Catholic and particularly Irish Catholic families, who tended to stick together, sending their children to church schools and marking the various Christian festivals with parades and processions, were often looked down upon by their protestant neighbours. In the East End there seems to have been a great deal of resentment between the Christian and Jewish communities. This ethnic and religious tension was fuelled by the fact that many better off Jewish households employed their poorer Christian women neighbours as cleaners, while Christian children were often employed as Sabbath goys to do simple tasks like lighting fires that their Jewish employers were forbidden by their faith to do themselves.

It was not the intention that this study be an oral history of growing-up in London between the wars. Rather it was planned to use about half a dozen oral history interviews to illustrate and, perhaps, clarify some of the points raised by the documentary evidence. As the project went on however, it became clear that oral testimony was going to become a key part of the thesis; therefore the oral history part of the project was expanded.

In the end 32 Londoners were interviewed. (See list of contributors) Of these four had to be discarded completely and two partly. This was because two of the contributors were found on interview to be from middle-class families.[22] One was found to have spent his childhood in Scotland, and one walked out part of the way through the interview claiming she had to go and feed her pet cat! The remaining two interviews had to be discarded because of recording faults.[23] This left 26 usable interviews. In addition material from five other interviews conducted by the author for a previous study has been included, thus the study is based on 31 interviews.

The majority of contributors were either clients of Day Care Centres or Pensioners Lunch Clubs run by Tower Hamlets Council or Age Concern, Westminster. Letters were sent to all 52 local authorities in London and to twelve charitable bodies working with the elderly; of these only four replied and only Tower

[22] A small amount of material from the interview with Frankie has been used, but only for comparative purposes and none of it was used in the statistical or other analysis.

[23] In the case of Rose the tape recorder failed completely and the whole interview was lost, while Henry's interview was drowned out by background noise.

Hamlets Council and Age Concern, Westminster offered support to the project. Although they were attending facilities in only two areas of London, as can be seen from the list of contributors, they came from across the capital and beyond; however, there was a bias towards the eastern and the northwestern areas of the city, which, it is hoped, the earlier material helps to even out.[24] No attempt was made to select the contributors beyond the facts that they had been brought up in working-class homes within the County of London between the wars. Most interviews lasted about 40 minutes and were based around a questionnaire (see appendix 1). Each interview was recorded and later transcribed.[25]

I gave considerable thought to the interview method. Should it be a full life interview? Should it be a free flowing unstructured discussion, allowing the subjects free rein to talk on any aspects of their childhood experience that they wished, or should the interviews be rigidly controlled and limited to a few very specific topics? I discounted the first option because, although such material might have been useful in other contexts, the time factor involved in conducting whole life interviews, which can take several hours and often require more than one session, was prohibitive especially when I was only interested in about 10 years of their lives. I rejected the second option because I wanted to be able to conduct some statistical analysis on the data recovered and therefore needed some specific questions answered, [26] but on the other hand the third option of a rigidly controlled and controlling interview was also to be avoided wherever possible as I wanted the contributors to be able to express themselves. The final questionnaire was a compromise between the second and third options which while asking for specific details on some points allowed the contributors the freedom to talk about the events of their childhood in an open and unrestricted way. [27]

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[24] The five earlier interviews were recorded in Battersea South West London with customers of the main post office.

[25] Copies of the original recordings and copies of the rough transcripts are available from the Templeman Library, University of Kent at Canterbury

[26] I do not pretend that the final sample from just 31 interviews can be used as a basis for a full scientific statistical analysis, simply because the sample size is obviously far too small, but I would argue that even this small sample does provide a useful insight into the lives of working-class London at the time.

[27] There are many books on historiography and the use of sources and it is probably best if one finds a particular method and sticks to it. To this end for the general historiographic methodology I have relied to large extent on John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods & New Directions in the Study of Modern History2nd ed* (London 1991), while for the oral history method I have, to a large extent, used Robert Perks, *Oral History: Talking about the Past* (London 1995)

This brings us back to the practical problems faced by the oral historian. Firstly, the interview should be conducted in surroundings that are familiar to the subject. I normally conducted my interviews either in the subjects' own homes or, more often, in a room at the centre they used. The interviewer must not appear threatening he or she should as far as is possible try to put the subject at ease by being relaxed and friendly. The question asked must at least on the surface seem natural. Where delicate subjects are raised or if the subject becomes distressed the interviewer must remain sympathetic but professional allowing the subject the option not to answer any questions that are found difficult.

No matter how good the questionnaire contributors will often try to tell the interviewer what they believe the interviewer wants to hear, thus care must be taken to avoid asking leading questions or revealing any personal bias of the interviewer. It was found that even something as simple as the order in which the questions were put could influence the contributors' response. Thus if a subject were asked, for example, how they were dressed at the age of ten and then subsequently asked about the games they played the subjects recalled the games they would have been playing when they were ten. This problem was easily overcome by altering the order in which the questions were put; thus, by asking the subject about their games before they were asked to describe their dress, a wider variety of play activities was revealed.

The decision to use oral testimony meant that as well as the practical I was also confronted with the theoretical problems associated with using memory as a source for historical research. There has been a lot of work done on the workings of memory much of it of course in the fields of psychology and psychoanalysis, but work has also been done in the fields of social science and anthropology where oral testimony is often used as a source.[28] How reliable is memory especially when, as in my case, one is looking at things that happened many decades ago? Does memory fade with time? What impact have later events had on those memories? What impact do outside influences have on an individual's memory? One of the main arguments against the use of oral testimony in historical research is that a person's memory is not objective but is liable to outside influence by what is often termed '*Popular Memory*'. This according to Trevor Lummis has come to mean: 'A generalized collective image

[28] See for example Ruth Finnegan, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (London 1992). This is a guide to the use of oral sources in anthropology.

of the past which, although held by the people, does not come from them.'[29] In this view, as Lummis points out, our perception of history is shaped by the establishment or, as he puts it institutions with economic and political and social power. It emphasizes the role of the media and organizations like English Heritage in popularising a certain image of the past often at the expense of others.

I would suggest that in some circumstances, particularly events surrounding some national crisis or trauma like the death of Diana Princess of Wales or the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, or the popular image of London during the blitz where, if we were to believe the popular image, there was no crime, or class distinction and 'everybody pulled together, it is undoubtedly true. It is certainly a problem that I have come across during my own research. For example, many of the contributors were keen or in some cases anxious to tell me of their wartime experiences. While in a group discussion several said that they could ' always keep their doors open' only one of the contributors pointed out that the reason for this was that most people had nothing worth stealing. Another contributor when asked about the games she had played as a child in the 1920s clearly recalled playing 'Monopoly" although this game was not invented until 1935! If one accepts the presence and influence of a 'collective' or 'popular memory' then one must also accept that memory is not simply a recollection of life as it was, but a construct of past and present ideology and therefore forms a part of our present consciousness. Having said this however one must not take the argument too far because, as Lummis again points out, to do so is to deny the memory's capacity to preserve distinct states of mind, or of our ability to distinguish between past and present, or that individuals have differing real experiences and memories of events which are to a greater or lesser extent influenced by the 'popular memory'.[30]

In his introduction to the second edition of *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* Paul Thompson points out that oral testimony is in fact no different from many other sources in that it has first been filtered through the human psyche and is subject to the same vagaries of interpretation, understanding and to a greater or lesser degree the filtering that personal perspective brings to any topic.[31]

[29] Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* (London 1987) p123
[30] Ibid pp123-124
[31] Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* 2nd Ed (London1992) pp XVII – XX For a fuller discussion of the role of memory in oral testimony, see also Paul Thompson *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* 4th Ed (Oxford 2000)

It is not simply this filtering process that has to be considered when using oral testimony. One must also confront the problem of human nature and what a contributor is prepared to tell the interviewer. Whoever we are we always present a certain 'public' image of ourselves to the world; this may well be our own self-image, but more often it is the image we wish others to see. This is as true for the oral history contributor as for anybody else. Although it may be conducted on a one to one basis between the interviewer and subject nonetheless the oral history interview is a public event. The subject is aware that the interview is being recorded and the interviewer may use whatever they say in a public forum. It is then up to the oral historian to determine how accurate an image the contributor has presented and to what extent the contributor has distorted their story either deliberately to promote their own image or, as I believe is more often the case, unconsciously to support their perception of the popular memory.

One must also take into consideration present day taboos and cultural and social pressures which might very well colour the response of a contributor. Lummis takes the example of asking about racist opinions that the subject might have held or indeed still hold but which in today's society are unacceptable. [32] I have, like most oral historians, had to confront this problem. When talking about issues like corporal punishment, for example, the present attitudes against the beating of children may well have influenced the way in which the contributors spoke of the way they were disciplined as children, but as Lummis points out, this can be overcome by softening the question or as in the case just cited by referring to it as 'something they did in the past'.

In the introduction to her 1998 book *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* Penny Summerfield argues that, what she describes as, the memory texts on which her book is based are 'products of relationships between subjects and audiences, and also between those subjects and the performance models available to them.'[33] Put more simply what Summerfield is arguing is that the stories collected by oral historians are often attempts by the subject to rationalize and place their own experiences within the structure of the popular memory.

Opponents of oral testimony may cite the example of the Chinese whisper where a message is distorted by repeated telling. It can not be denied that many of the

[32] Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History* pp122-123
[33] Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* (Manchester 1998) p16

stories that I collected had been told many times before, either to children or grandchildren or in the case of Dusty to another researcher, so one must take into account the processes of refinement as it is widely accepted that stories get better with repeated telling and form a key part of an individual's 'public image.' Opponents also claim that memory fades with time and that this too can lead to distortion. It is true that if, for example, one were to ask a contributor about the people present at a party they had attended some thirty or forty year ago it is, unless they kept a written record, almost certain that would be unable to remember; but ask them about some particularly cataclysmic event in their lives or simply ask what time they got up in the morning or the route they took to work or school and one could be almost as certain that their reply would be both factual and accurate. For by asking about the mundane and minutiae of everyday life which has been etched into the memory by continuous repetition one is often able to defeat the ravages of time.

How is the oral historian to overcome these problems? Do they in fact make the collection of oral testimony a valueless exercise? What is the point of collecting stories from people whose memories may have faded over time or have been influenced by the popular memory or who are trying to project a public image of themselves? In other words is oral testimony a valid historical source or should it be left to students of popular culture and folklore?

Both Summerfield and Lummis report examples of where oral testimony has been found to be an unreliable source but have both then gone on to show how given the right circumstances, it can be an invaluable tool in the historian's armoury, and this is the approach adopted in this thesis.

It must be remembered that all of the contributors to this thesis were in some way affected by war. Those born after 1927 had their childhoods interrupted by the events of the Second World War while those born before 1914 had to live through the trauma of two world wars. It would be naive to believe that these cataclysmic events did not colour their recollections or their childhood experiences.[34] Thus, when looking at some areas of childhood experience, it is important to take account of these events. Many of the younger people who were interviewed for this project, for example, were subject to disruption because of the wartime conditions, some of them gaining their

[34] For a discussion of the impact of trauma on memory see David W Jones, Distressing Histories and Unhappy Interviewing *Oral History* 26/2 (1998) 49-56 and Nigel Hunt and Ian Robbins, Telling Stories of the War: Aging Veterans Coping with their Memories Through Narrative *Oral History* 26/2 (1998) 57-64

first work experiences while evacuees, while others were directed into occupations that they might not otherwise have chosen. Others who remained in the capital effectively left school at the age of eleven or twelve because their schools were closed and they fell outside the education system, thus affecting their experience of school. Many of the contributors seem to have been traumatised by the events of war, some were separated from their families and friends by evacuation during the second. Some of the older contributors lost parents or siblings in both conflicts. Many of the contributors seem to have been affected by bombing. Alice W for example was keen to talk about the bombing of the First World War while Irene was keen to talk about being bombed out twice in the same week and then being bombed out again after she and her mother had been evacuated to Bristol.

Some written autobiographies were also used in this study both to provide support to and fill in gaps from the oral testimony. The same degree of care must be used when using these sources as with the oral testimony as many writers have their own agenda. By this I mean that they seek to paint a certain picture of both themselves and their surroundings while at the same time trying to answer certain questions about their life experiences.

Only limited use has been made of written autobiographical material in this study. This was firstly because although there are many excellent autobiographical accounts of growing up in this period only a limited number relate to the experience of growing up in London. Secondly, and more significantly, it is the events of 1939-45 that dominate the lives and the memoirs of most writers. There are, for example, innumerable accounts of both evacuation from and life in London during the Blitz. Indeed most of the contributors, when first approached, thought that I too was interested only in their wartime experiences, with very few detailing the everyday experience of growing up in London between the wars.

The study is divided into five chapters each looking at a different aspect of the experience of growing-up during the inter-war period and contrasting that with experience of growing-up before the Great War as portrayed in the works of historians like Davin, Humphries, Roberts and Ross.

The first chapter looks at home life and relationships with siblings and parents dealing with such issues as overcrowding, sanitation and the use of energy within the home as well as considering the part played by children in the domestic economy.

The second chapter deals with the experience of school life looking at the influence of new educational ideas, focusing particularly on the effects of the 1926 report of the Hadow Committee on the future structure of secondary education. The chapter goes further, using oral testimony in an attempt to paint a portrait of school life through the eyes of the children, thus countering the trend within the field of the history of education which tends to see schooling through the eyes of the educators and administrators, and often treats children as objects upon which education was performed rather than as consumers and participants in the process of education.

The third chapter in a natural progression from the second looks at the work of the various school-based Child Welfare Agencies ranging from the Schools Care Committees and Meals Services to the work of the Schools Medical Service. Here again, oral testimony is used to highlight the differences between the perceptions of the work done by these organisations from the points of view of the providers and recipients. It is not the aim of this work to look at the efforts of the child redemption and protection agencies like the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children or the work of the Juvenile Courts and Approved Schools, whose work involved only a minority of children, but rather to look at the influence of welfare organisations on the majority of London's working-class children.

The fourth chapter explores the world of children's play looking at where and when children played. It considers the types of games that were popular with children, asking how the choice of games changed both with the seasons and the age of the children involved. The influence that the adult world had on children's play activities will also be examined, as the chapter seeks to show how adults sought to influence and control children's play activities, demonstrating how attitudes towards working-class children in general, and their unrestricted and unsupervised street play in particular, influenced that effort. It will be shown how children's street play was often perceived as a threat to the good order of society and the gateway to crime. The various attempts to discipline children's play will be discussed as will children's attempts to fight back against what was often perceived as adult interference.

The final chapter, because of the nature of the topic, looks at the impact that national government policy as interpreted through the medium of local government bye-laws had on the world of children's employment, showing how patterns of children's employment changed during the inter-war period. Was there was a radical

shift in the nature of the work undertaken by children in the inter-war period or was it simply a continuation of that undertaken by previous generations?

There are, as might be expected, several themes running throughout the thesis including the, apparently, often difficult relationship between national and local government and between the various departments of government. These conflicts are, perhaps, best seen in chapters two and five where the twin issues of the school leaving age and children's employment are discussed. For while much of the legislation relating to children was permissive it was in the twin areas of leaving school and starting work that government legislation became more prescriptive with the raising of the school leaving age to 14, the removal of local authorities' powers to grant exceptions and the introduction of firmer controls on children's employment which had, until the 1918 Education Act, been controlled by local authorities through their bye-laws. The conflicting positions of local and national government can also be seen in such issues as the use of corporal punishment in schools and the provision of school meals and clothing for necessitous children, which incidentally also highlights the differences in legislation between England and Scotland.

The theme of continuity and change also runs throughout the thesis and will, it is hoped, form part of the much wider debate about the impact of the First World War on British society There has for many years been a historical debate about the impact of the First World War. Was it, as has been argued by historians like Arthur Marwick, a turning point in British society, an event so cataclysmic that it had a marked and lasting effect on the whole structure and nature of Britain?[35] Or was it, as has been suggested by historians like Gerard DeGroot, simply a blip on the steady march of social change that had begun long before the outbreak of war in 1914?[36] Both Marwick and DeGroot recognise that some changes took place after the war, most notably the introduction of universal adult suffrage, but they disagree on what impact the war had on these changes: was it simply the catalyst for change or would these changes have happened anyway? Did the war either slowed them down or speeded them up? One of the aims of this thesis then is to discover whether there was a marked change in the life experience of children of the post Great War generation compared to that of their parents who were brought up in the pre war Edwardian Era.

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[35] Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London 1973) pp 289-314
[36] Gerard J. DeGroot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London 1996) pp 290-311

Before going on to look at the experience of working-class childhood in London between the wars it is perhaps appropriate to look briefly at what the city was like at this time.[37]On the face of it the London of the inter-war period was essentially a modern expanding city as large parts of the centre and the west end were redeveloped. The famous shopping area of Regent Street running from Oxford Circus to Piccadilly Circus was rebuilt in the 1920s as the 1823 John Nash houses were swept away to provide room for the new Cathedrals of Commerce, the department stores with their forests of ground floor windows displaying the fruits of the new consumer age for all to see and buy. The Chicago businessman Gordon Selfridge had brought the department store to London when he opened the first stage of his new store at the unfashionable end of Oxford Street in 1909. By the start of the inter-war period this had become one of the city's landmarks, and had spawned a whole new way of shopping as department stores spread across the capital and the country. By 1938 no small market town was complete without its bright shiny modern department store selling everything from hat pins to radio sets. At the same time great new hotels were being built to cater mainly for the waves of wealthy American tourists who were flocking to Europe and to London. Thus on Park Lane, Grosvenor House, the ancestral seat of the Duke of Westminster, and The Old Dorchester House were demolished in the 1920s to make way for the grand new hotels that were to bear their names.[38]

During the Great War new electrically powered armaments factories had been built around the North Eastern and North Western edges of the capital at places like Park Royal to the northwest. Before the war this had been a rather unsuccessful agricultural show ground but was to prove to be a very successful industrial estate with the giant Guinness brewery at its heart.[39]

The munitions factories that had helped supply the massive needs for ammunition on the Western Front were soon colonised by new manufacturing concerns looking to convert from wartime to civil production as world trade began to recover from the effects of the war. London became one of the main centres of industrial production in Britain, but it was not the traditional industries like heavy engineering, shipbuilding and textiles, but rather the rise in the demand for new

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[37] The next section of this introduction is drawn almost exclusively from Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries, *The Making of Modern London 1914-1939* (London 1984)
[38] Ibid pp 31-32
[39] Ibid p55

consumer goods that helped to fuel London's growth. With the coming of the radio and the spread of electrification whole new electrical component and consumer-based industries began to spring up around the fringes of the capital. In 1924 and 1925, for example, the Great Empire Exhibition was held at Wembley, then a quiet rural area to the west of the city, as part of which the famous stadium was built. At the end of the exhibition the abandoned site, with its empty pavilions, was soon colonized by companies looking for places to set up new small and medium scale manufacturing plants. Wembley proved ideal with its network of new roads and railway station, all of which had been built to service the exhibition.

Several new arterial roads were also built at this time, partly to improve the capital's communications with the rest of the country, but also as a way of finding employment for the thousands of former solders who were returning looking for the 'land fit for heroes' that they had been promised. Soon, new roads like the Great North Road and the West Way were bordered by new industrial and suburban developments as speculative builders seized the opportunity to buy up the cheap, unprofitable agricultural land that bordered the new roads and convert it into new housing and industrial estates.

This influx of industrial development was led from America as American companies like Hoover, Coca Cola and Ford sought to establish themselves in Europe. They chose the area bordering London as the ideal site for their new manufacturing plants; thus in 1923 Henry Ford chose to build his giant car assembly plant at Dagenham in Essex rather than on a site near the port of Southampton which had been selected by his European agent.[40]

The choice of Dagenham by Ford coincided with the construction by the London County Council (LCC) of a massive new council housing estate at Becontree, destined to be the largest of its kind in the world at the time. This marked a shift in government policy from the *laissez faire* attitudes of the Victorian and Edwardian eras to the beginnings of a new paternalist attitude towards the population, which would eventually lead to the foundation of the National Health Service and the Welfare State. The LCC went on to build another giant estate at Downham in Kent. But when they tried to build a third at Bexley also in Kent they were met with fierce opposition from the local residents who feared an influx of slum-dwellers, and both the Town

[40] Ibid p 68

and County Councils who believed that the LCC was trying to extend its influence and power. [41]

As will be shown in chapter one, the provision of new working-class housing by the LCC and the local Borough Councils did not benefit all sections of the working class; because rents for these new homes were more expensive than homes in the poorer inner-city districts, many ordinary families could not afford them. Moving to the outer reaches of the capital also meant that workers were forced to travel further to work thus incurring greater expense. It was, therefore, not practicable for the ordinary working-class family with an income of between £3 and £4 a week to move out of the crowded inner city into the new council-built suburbs.[42] In the face of resistance both from neighbouring local authorities and from the working classes for whom the houses were to be built, the LCC turned to building homes within the confines of the old county boundaries. Here again the LCC met with resistance, this time in the shape of the local Borough Councils many of whom had already started to clear away some of the worst slum areas and to build new blocks of flats to house poorer working-class families; and who resented what they saw as the intrusion of the LCC into their affairs.

Thanks in part to the development of new industries and the building of council estates on the outskirts of the old county area, in the twenty years between 1918 and 1938 London effectively doubled in size. (Map 01) Much of this growth was not due however to actions by the LCC or the growth of new industries, but rather to improvements in the transport infrastructure. It was the coming of the underground railway that spurred London's growth far beyond its Victorian boundaries.

The underground railway system had begun in earnest in 1890 with the start of the first deep underground railway (the Stockwell to City line). This had been made possible by the development of electric traction in the United States in the late 1880s. By the early 1920s London's Underground was controlled by two main companies, the Metropolitan Railway Company and the Underground Group. The former was immortalised by its advertising as the creator of 'Metroland', the new suburban housing developments which it established around its new stations in the unspoilt countryside surrounding the capital. By far the most powerful of these new

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[41] Ibid p110
[42] See appendix 2 for a list of some typical wage rates of the period

underground railway companies was the Underground Group, which, under the direction of its Chairman Lord Ashfield and its brilliant commercial manager Frank Pick, took a controlling interest in the London General Omnibus Company, thus linking underground and bus services. But it was not until 1933 that London's transport infrastructure was finally brought together when the London Passenger Transport Board was established under the direction of Pick and Ashfield.

Throughout its existence the Underground Group, like its counterpart the Metropolitan Railway, pursued a policy of expansion much of it funded by the Treasury through unemployment work schemes. Lines and stations were built out into the countryside surrounding the capital, and then suburban housing was built on the surplus land it had acquired in the process. A good example of this can be seen in the extension of the Northern Line from Clapham Common to the village of Morden in Surrey, which, before the coming of the tube, was a quiet country village on the outskirts of the capital. Within a few short years it had become a suburb well within the new Greater London city limits.[43]

It seemed that the spread of London was unstoppable. It was not until the Ribbon Development Act 1935 that local authorities were finally given powers to control developers and this led to the creation of a so-called green belt. This was an area surrounding the city on which no new development could be built thus finally bringing to an end to the rampant building frenzy of the inter-war period.

Politically throughout much of the inter-war period the Conservative Municipal Reform Party controlled the LCC. It was not until 1934 that Labour under the leadership of Herbert Morrison, took control of the County Council, after which the LCC policy shifted from trying to build suburban cottage estates for the upper working and lower middle classes to the construction of homes for the urban poor in the shape of blocks of flats within the inner city. The Conservative principle of the LCC for much of the period could also be seen in their education policy (the LCC was the education authority within the capital): thus there was less provision for the secondary education of children in poorer districts than in the better-off areas, while overall secondary provision was almost half the national average.

Thus it can be seen that on the surface the London of the inter-war period was a vibrant expanding modern city full of bright lights and entertainment, with new

[43] Gavin Weightman and Steve Humphries, *The Making of Modern London 1914-1939* pp 85-89

shops, hotels and restaurants providing, for those who could afford it, opportunities for an unremitting round of entertainment and pleasures. At another level it was a city of new suburban housing developments with new smaller servant-less semi-detached houses and new local shopping parades in places like Morden, Eltham, Golders Green or the new Hampstead Garden Suburb. While in the poorest district it was still the old Victorian city with overcrowded dirty back streets full of scruffy, dirty children.

Londoners might live on one of the new cottage estates, in a new house with modern conveniences like bathrooms and electricity, in the wilds of Essex or Kent. The drawbacks of such places were that their homes might be a long way from family and friends, with little entertainment in the vicinity, as most of the new estates had very few cinemas or pubs. There were, for example, just six pubs on the Becontree estate, which had a population of 120,000, and it was a long walk to the local shops or a tiring trip into the city to work in one of the new shops or office blocks or at one of the new consumer goods factories.[44] Londoners might find themselves living in one of the new blocks of flats that the local Borough Councils were building close to their work places with modern conveniences and electric lighting. This was fine for the lucky few, but for the majority of the working-class Londoners who could not afford, or were unwilling, given the opportunity, to move to these new homes London was little changed from the Victorian city. As will be shown, the majority of ordinary working-class Londoners and their children occupied the same houses and walked the same streets and lived almost the same lives as their Victorian and Edwardian forbears. It is on the children of these Londoners, those that were still living within the confines of the old Victorian city as determined by the County of London boundaries, that this study concentrates. As will be shown not all of those who chose to move to the new suburban areas remained there; many, cut off from both family and friends, chose to move back to the inner-city areas in which they had been brought up. It will be shown that not all working-class districts were to be found concentrated in the east or southeast of the city but that working-class districts and even areas of extreme deprivation and poverty could, as in the case of North Kensington, be found cheek by jowl with some of the most exclusive central districts of the capital.

[44] Ibid p 137

CHAPTER ONE
THE CHILD AT HOME

Possibly the two most important factors influencing any child's life are their home and family. This chapter seeks to explore the home and family life of London's working-class children between the wars, contrasting this with the experience of childhood in London before the First World War as described in the works of Anna Davin and Ellen Ross, to show how much, or how little, effect the war and subsequent changes in social attitudes had on the experience of working-class children's home lives.

The chapter will use a mixture of official records and social surveys conducted at the time, together with the family experiences recorded by a group of Londoners, to attempt to recreate the experience of growing up in the London of the inter-war period. The chapter will rely heavily on oral testimony because, as Anna Davin points out, this is the only way to get inside and explore the inner workings of a family unit,[1] while official records and the findings of the social surveyors will be used to fill in the gaps left by the oral evidence.

The chapter starts by looking at one of the most important areas of debate and concern at the beginning of the period: that of housing. One of Lloyd George's promises in the 'Coupon Election' of 1918 was that the troops would return to 'homes fit for heroes', but this promise, like so many others, soon proved illusory for, despite a major building programme in the immediate post-war period, many families continued to live in insanitary and overcrowded conditions throughout the inter-war period. The chapter will explore the experience of living in overcrowded multi-occupancy houses and the reaction of some families as they moved into the new flats and houses that were being built by local Borough Councils and the London County Council (LCC).

At a time when technological advances, particularly in the shape of electrification, were spreading across the capital we will be examining how widespread these advances were, asking how they affected the working class and looking at life before and after the coming of electricity. Questions like what forms of

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[1] Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London 1996) pp 7-11

heating and lighting were used in working-class homes and how these changed during the inter-war period will also be explored in this section.

The influence that parents, grandparents and other relations had on children's lives will be examined next. What effect did adult family members have on children's lives both directly, in that they were responsible for the provision of food and shelter and indirectly, in their role as moral guardians and the setters of standards of manners and behaviour? This section will also ask what effect parental employment had on the children? Did, for example, mothers go out to work and, if so, what effect did this have on the children? What sorts of jobs did fathers have? In this period of sustained high unemployment did father have a job at all? How did these issues affect the social status and comfort of the family as a whole and the children in particular?

This brings us on to one of the underlying themes of the thesis how did children learn their place within the wider society and what impact did theirs and others perceptions have on their lives?

The influence that parental habits like drinking and gambling had on children's lives will also be examined to discover how, if at all, the new licensing laws that had been introduced during the Great War affected working-class children's lives. Was there for example a reduction in the numbers of abusive drunken husbands and indeed mothers thanks to the new restrictions that had been placed on the consumption of alcohol?

The next section will explore the influence of family size on the experience of childhood. Did their older brothers and sisters always welcome new siblings? Or were they seen simply as a further burden on already overstretched resources? What effect did the loss of a child have on the family unit? And how did the size of the family and the position of an individual child within the family unit influence the number and types of chores that he or she was expected to perform? It will go on to ask what influence gender had on the children's tasks: were boys treated differently from girls and, irrespective of gender, did older children have a different experience of family life from that of their younger siblings?

Oral history evidence will be used to explore some of the internal mechanics of family life, looking at such issues as diet and meal times, asking when children ate, what sorts of meals they had, and whether all of the family had the same standard of food, or was there, as has often been suggested, a marked difference in the diet of

working members of the family and others, and between mothers and the rest of the family. The tradition of the Sunday Roast and the Sunday High Tea will also be examined to discover if this supposed bastion of working-class family life was the experience of most working-class children.

Perhaps one of the most important areas of family dynamics is expressed in the area of discipline. The penultimate section will ask who was responsible for discipline and behaviour within the family. It will look at what were considered to be acceptable standards of children's behaviour and ask who set those standards, looking at the differences between what was considered to be a crime within different families and asking how these differences were influenced by a family's perceived social position within the working class. It will then examine the different types of punishments that were imposed, to discover whether differences in socio-economic position influenced attitudes towards standards of discipline and the methods of punishment used to enforce those standards.

In the final section the chapter will consider the public face of the family, looking at how children were dressed and at how the clothes that they wore and their hairstyles could label them as coming from a particular section of the working class. The section will also explore just where children's clothes came from, asking whether the clothes that working-class children wore were new or second-hand. The prevalence of hand-me-downs and the purchase of new and second-hand clothes as well as the role of charity in providing clothing within the working class will all be explored. It will be asked how the acquisition of children's clothing differed between different sections of the working class. It will be shown how the socio-economic geography of the city was reflected in the experience of childhood between the wars.

1.1 A Home fit for Heroes

One of the key problems facing those in authority at the start of the inter-war period was the task of providing decent affordable housing. In a speech at Wolverhampton on 23rd November 1918 Lloyd George first made the promise- that he was often to repeat- that the men returning from the trenches of France would return to 'A Home Fit For Heroes'.[2] The government had been forced to take an active part in housing policy in 1915 after a series of rent strikes across the country culminated in a massed

[2] Laurence F Olbach, *Homes for Heroes: A Study of the Evolution of British Public Housing 1915-1921* (London1977) p66

protest in Glasgow.[3] After this the Government caved in and introduced controls on rents and mortgage interest rates, which were to be continued and extended after the war. In his promises Lloyd George was not speaking idly, for the government had plans to begin a building programme to provide affordable working-class homes. However, like so many other plans and promises, this one was soon broken as the economic depression of 1921 brought the programme to a premature halt. It was these same economic factors that curtailed the London County Council's (LCC) efforts to build cheap affordable housing for rent both within and around the capital in 1921, 1924 and 1931 when council house building programmes were suspended or cancelled.

So in what sort of conditions did London's working-class children live? What did they use for lighting, heating and cooking? What sort of sanitary arrangements did they have? How many rooms did they live in and how much space was there within their homes? Many of these questions were addressed by the *New Survey of London Life and Labour,* which was conducted between 1928 and 1930 and was published between 1929-1934,[4] forty years after Charles Booth's original.[5] It was intended to show just how much the conditions of London's working-class population had improved during the intervening years and, indeed, it did show great improvements in the lives of the poorest sections of London's working class, but it also highlighted just how little some aspects of their lives had changed.

Where then did working-class Londoners and their children live? The New Survey reported that, in spite of a marked improvement, one of the greatest problems in the capital was still the lack of affordable housing, which meant that there was serious overcrowding in some parts of the city. The survey used two definitions of overcrowding: the first was the simple definition used by Booth in the original 1889 survey, that a home was overcrowded if there were two or more persons to a room.[6] The second method was that used by the Manchester Public Health Committee. This was based on the relationship between the number of bedrooms and the age and sex of the members of the family. The principles on which this standard was based were:-

(a) The sexes must be separate when aged 10 or over, except in the case or married (or ostensibly married) couples.

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[3] Ibid Chpt.1
[4] Herbert Llewellyn-Smith (Ed), *The New Survey of London Life and Labour* (London 1929-34)
[5] Booth Charles, *Life and Labour of the People of London* (London 1889)
[6] Booth used these figures to relate overcrowding to occupation

(b) Counting persons aged 10 or over as 1 and persons under 10 as ½, there must not be more than 2 ½ persons per bedroom on average.[7]

The survey found that both methods produced remarkably similar results Table 1.1 and Figure 1.1 show the average number of persons per room and although at first sight, this might suggest that there was no overcrowding, it must be remembered that these figures include single people and couples occupying whole houses, as well as large families living in a couple of rooms in shared houses.

Table 1.1Number of persons per room in working class tenements

Shoreditch	1.58	Greenwich	1.23	Tottenham	1.06
Finsbury	1.48	North Lambeth	1.18	Wandsworth	1.04
Stepney	1.47	Hammersmith	1.14	Acton	1.00
Bethnal Green	1.46	Fulham	1.14	Barking	1.00
St Marylebone	1.37	Deptford	1.13	Walthamstow	1.00
Holborn	1.35	Hackney	1.13	Hornsey	0.95
Southwark	1.32	Westminster	1.12	Leyton	0.94
Bermondsey	1.31	Battersea	1.11	Lewisham	0.94
Kensington	1.30	Stoke Newington	1.11	South Lambeth	0.93
Poplar	1.29	Camberwell	1.09	Woolwich	0.93
Chelsea	1.27	Hampstead	1.08		
West Ham	1.27	Willesdon	1.08		
St Pancras	1.26	Paddington	1.06		

Taken From *New Survey of London Life & Labour* III p227 & VI p 56

These figures may best be illustrated graphically

[7] *New Survey of London Life and Labour* III p229

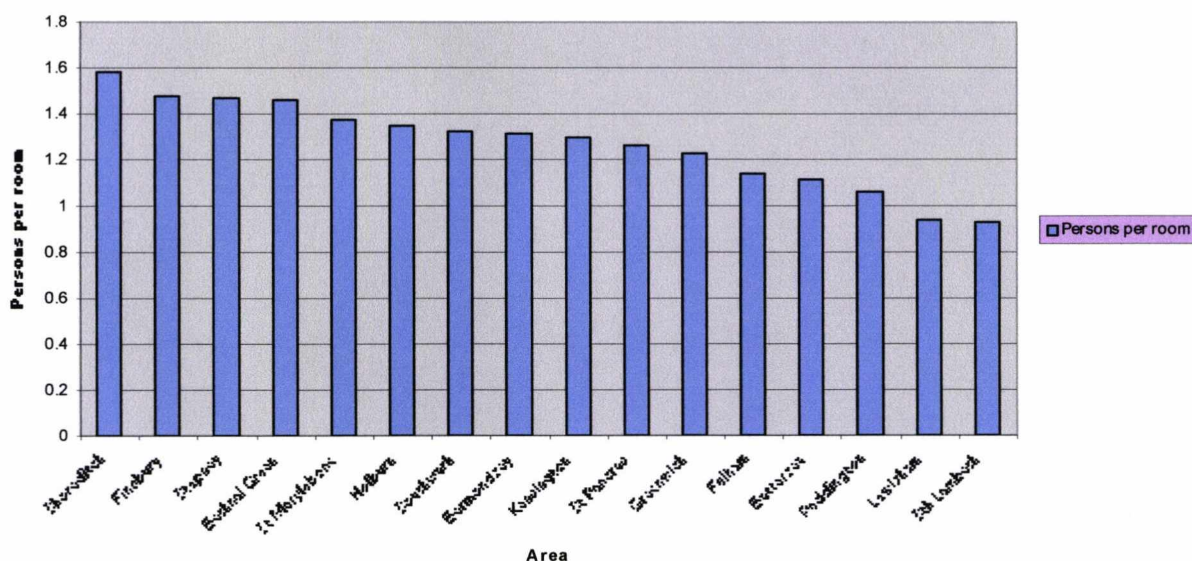

Figure 1.1 Taken from *New Survey of London life and Labour* III p227 & VI p56

The graph shows that, as might be expected, the most overcrowded areas were generally to the east of the city, with Shoreditch being by far the most overcrowded borough in the survey area, while the richer areas of Lewisham, and South Lambeth (including the affluent Brixton) were least congested.

Using the results of their house survey, the authors were able to apply the Manchester criteria to their findings to show the percentage of children under 14 living in overcrowded conditions according to the bedroom standard (Table & Figure 1.2).

Table 1.2 Percentage of all children under 14 years living in overcrowded tenement

	Deficiency of Bedrooms Provided	Actual Overcrowding	Necessary Overcrowding
Bethnal Green	65	54	53
Shoreditch	67	52	56
Stepney	72	60	58
Bermondsey	62	59	49
Greenwich	57	49	40
Holborn	76	68	64
Southwark	75	73	53
Fulham	68	45	29
Finsbury	67	53	63
St Marylebone	65	65	54
Kensington	65	43	47
St Pancras	63	55	50

Taken from *New Survey of London Live and Labour* III p233 & V p61

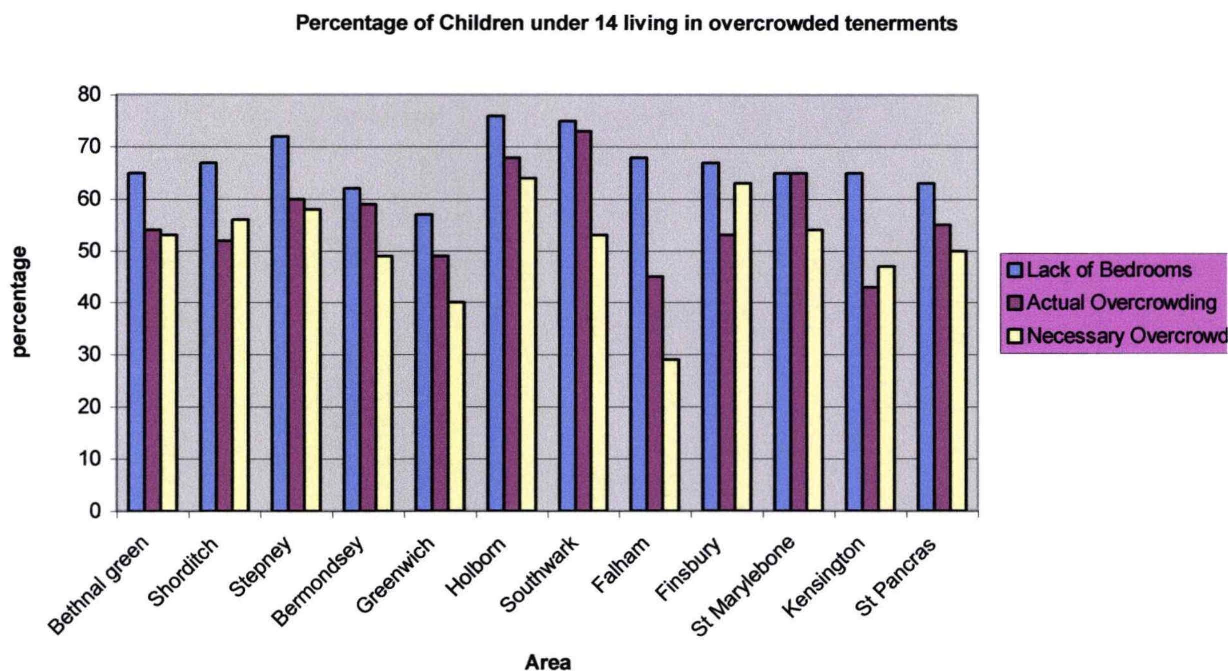

Figure 1.1 Taken From *New Survey of London Life & Labour* III p232 & VI p61

This table and graph need a little explanation. Column one shows the percentage of children found to be living in homes with too few bedrooms to meet the Manchester occupancy standard of 2 ½ persons per room. Column two takes into account the use of other rooms like sitting rooms and kitchens as bedrooms, while column three shows the percentage of children under 14 who were still overcrowded even when all the available space within the home was used to provide sleeping accommodation.

Again it can be seen from these results that even when every available space is used (column3) children in many parts of the survey area experienced overcrowding. In fact it can be seen from these figures that in many parts of inner London it was the norm, rather than the exception, for working-class children to experience overcrowding.

These results are reflected in the oral history evidence. Out of the 31 people asked about their sleeping arrangements 18 (60%) reported that they had to share a bedroom and of these 13 (40%) said that they shared a bed; only 10(30%) of the people questioned reported that they had their own room, and in these cases they were either only children or the only child of a particular sex, and in four of these cases they reported that their siblings shared a bedroom or a bed. The remaining three

people, all male, reported that they slept in places other than bedrooms, one in the kitchen behind a wooden screen, one in the 'living room' and one out on a landing!

It seems obvious that one of the key factors in determining the chances of living in overcrowded conditions was family size: the larger the family the greater the chances of that family being overcrowded. The finding of the 1931 census supported those of the New Survey. The census found that in the County of London 89,600 families or 541,352 individuals (13.1% of the total population) were living more than 2 to a room. This was a reduction of more than 20,000 (3%) since 1921. But this still does not compare favourably with the national average of 9.6% of the population living in overcrowded conditions.[8]

The other key factors were of course family income and location. The New Survey reported that rents varied according to the type of accommodation and location. It found that rents for working-class homes ranged from as little as 3s a week up to a massive 20s (£1) for a two-room tenement,[9] while the average cost per room was about 3.5 shillings. In Bethnal Green, for example, the average rent for a separate house was 12.2 shillings per week, while for rooms in a shared house it was 10.8 shillings. In Bermondsey a separate house cost 13.5 shillings and a shared house 9.7 shillings and in Kensington the average cost of a single house was 16.6 shillings and a shared house 10.1 shillings. On average the cheapest place to live was found to be in a purpose built flat in Woolwich, which cost just 7.3 shillings.[10]

It would seem that many families lived in shared or multi-occupancy houses, which had originally been built for single families but which were then let out as flats or even single rooms. In this study nineteen of the contributors recalled living in a shared house at some time in their childhood. It would seem that it was quite common for a street of ordinary two-storey houses to be divided up, with one family living on the ground floor and another upstairs. Larger houses might have even more families living in them, with a family to every floor as Harry B remembers from his first home in Camden Town:

> Weedington in those days was a very long road bisected by Queens Crescent. To the south of Queens Crescent the property was good condition and a more affluent area; but north of Queens Crescent it degenerated into slums quite quickly and I was at the far end of

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[8] Census 1931 Report of the County of London table VIII
[9] *New Survey of London Life and Labour*. III p52
[10] *New Survey of London Life and Labour* III p54 & VI p 49

> Weedington Road, which was the slum area. It was a four-storey house with six families living in it and, I think, totalling there was about thirty people living in that one house.[11]

It must be remembered that overcrowding was not simply confined to the East End but, as can be seen from Figure 1, was a problem for working-class families across the capital. The most extreme example of overcrowding I came across was from the autobiography of Tom McCarthy, who was born in the infamous Campbell Road (better known as Campbell Bunk) in Islington North London in 1926.[12] McCarthy recalls that the six-roomed house in which he was born already had 26 other occupants.[13]

Living in such cramped conditions led to a range of other problems besides sleeping arrangements, perhaps the most obvious being the difficulties in keeping children clean. At this time most working-class homes lacked a bathroom simply because they did not have space for such luxuries. Indeed some families like those of Elizabeth W and George did not even have a supply of running water:

> We had a tap supplied two houses in the middle you'd go outside there was the tap there on a bit of an angle like that you go out the next door neighbour comes out used the same tap.[14]

By the start of the inter-war period most houses, however, do seem to have had a cold water supply, but living in homes where hot water was not readily available meant that such tasks as washing clothes and bathing were still major logistical exercises. It is little wonder then that for most a bath was, at best, a weekly affair. Many of the contributors recalled their weekly dip in the family's tin bath in front of the fire. In large families like Minnie's, it was often the job of an older sister to supervise the children's bathing while in some it was a regular production line:

> We had an old fashioned copper in an old fashioned scullery and we used to have a little fire underneath the copper. My mother used to go and get bags of chips and any old thing that you had to burn, old boots, any old thing, so long as it kept the fire going. And every Friday my eldest sister she was 10 years older than me, and she lived to a hundred, she's been gone about five years now... she used to bath us every Friday night. She used to do mine and my sisters the youngest that I was the sixth child because there was eight of us in all I had three brothers and four sisters and she used to bath us and put our hair in all long white pieces of rag and we used to come out all curly for Sunday.[15]

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[11] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p2

[12] See Jerry White, *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington Between the Wars* (London 1986) This is a detailed study of the bunk between the wars which provides a fascinating insight into the life of one of the inter-war London's most notorious districts

[13] Tom McCarthy *Boysie* (London 1986) pp7-8.

[14] Interview with George (b1920) p2. See also interview with Elizabeth (b.1925) p2

[15] Interview With Minnie (b.1905) p2

For the older children, particularly it would seem for the boys, there was always the option of the public baths. Amy remembers her brothers all going off for their weekly dip at Chelsea public baths:

> The boys when they got bigger they went to Chelsea public baths. Get a bath for a penny or two pence. Used to give them the money and a lump of soap and a flannel and send them off. They used to go to the baths, and they used to say they'd get in these baths and they used to shout 'Bill', and Bill might be right the way up in the middle cubicle. 'I'm here,' 'all right are you getting out?' and the old boys shout out 'shut up' he said 'get on with washing yourself' Oh it was funny my mother said 'my God' The larks they had there and they all came out nice and clean. Come home, brought all their dirty clothes and all their wet stuff, course that was always on Saturday night when they had it. Course Monday morning that (the dirty laundry) was in the copper boiling up.[16]

George recalls the customers of these establishments were not trusted to have control of the water supply. This was in the charge of the baths attendant:

> There was one up there used to go up there of a weekend used to go in get a ticket and go in and they'd fill your bath up with water and once you go in if you wanted more water used to have to shout out 'hot water in number seven'. The man come round with a key outside turned the wheel like that water comes in whether you wanted hot or cold. Them days was hard.[17]

And once the ritual of bathing was complete, woe betide any child that dared to get dirty. Some parents went to great lengths to keep their children clean at least for one day as Alice W remembered:

> Well Saturday afternoon even a day like this (warm & Sunny) we'd have our bath in the afternoon and we'd have to go to bed. We could read in bed or, you know, but you weren't allowed to get up and dance around in case you got dirty.[18]

It was only when such families were re-housed in the new council flats or houses that baths, but not necessarily bathrooms, became readily available. In many flats the LCC provided a plumbed-in bath in the kitchen, complete with a wooden top so that it could be used as a table during the day.

If bathrooms were a rarity inside toilets were equally scarce. It was still, as it had been in the Victorian era, generally felt that toilets should be outside as it was not healthy to have them inside the house; even Ernie who lived for a while in an old block of flats in Paddington, recalled that the toilet was 'out on the landing of the flats facing the canal' and was shared between the four flats on his landing. The sharing of toilets seems to have been the exception, rather than the rule, even for those who lived in shared houses. There seems to have been separate toilet provision for each family

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[16] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p8
[17] Interview with George (b.1920) p2
[18] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) p5

even if this meant that the convenience was to be found in unusual places As Fred S remembered:

> Downstairs we had an outside toilet in the yard. The upstairs, actually, we, it was inside, but just about. It was on what they called a flats.. You get on to a flats see and this toilet backed onto the flats see it was inside but it was really a cold place.[19]

If keeping clean was one problem another was keeping warm. Most families relied on an open fire to heat their homes. These were generally only lit in one room (frequently the kitchen) as it was too expensive, not to say too much effort, to light fires in every room even if this were possible. So it was common on cold winter nights to find the whole family gathered in the one warm room of their home.

The one major advantage of the open fire was of course that almost anything could be used as fuel from old boots to the furniture or even the front door if things got really desperate. A particular favourite with many families were the 'tarry blocks' used in road construction which had the major advantages of both burning well and being free, although as Fred M remembers you had to be careful with them:

> (We) used to find out where they were digging up the road these tarry blocks. Used to go round we had prams, old prams we used to have...used to load them up with tarry blocks and take them home but the only trouble with them they used to spit out the tar all the time know what I mean and stones.[20]

The other main source of fuel for the fire was coke. This was produced as a bi-product of the manufacture of 'town gas' and was both cheap and readily available throughout London.[21] It was often the job of the boys of the family to collect their supply of coke from the local gas works. In fact, as will be discussed below, many boys earned their pocket money by supplying kindling and fuel for the fires of their neighbours, while for those who could afford it there was always the coalman. A few families or those without grates supplemented their heating with oil-burning stoves, the oil either coming from a local oil shop carried home in cans, or delivered to the door by a roving oilman.

If heating was generally provided by open fires lighting seems mainly, almost right up to the outbreak of the Second World War, to have been supplied by gas. Of the 31 people interviewed 22 reported that their childhood homes were only lit by gas

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[19] Interview With Fred S (b.1921) p3 Note the flats were the flat roofs on the neighbouring buildings.
[20] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p2
[21] 'Town gas' produced by the chemical cracking of tar was used in Britain until the 1970s when the first supplies of natural (methane gas) became readily available.

jets, or more commonly mantles. These were fragile and expensive things that had to be handled with great care:

> We had gas, gas mantles. When we used to go to buy them you hold them careful or the wind would blow them away, and then you were in dead trouble. because they cost money and you didn't have the money. So you had to go along, I used to take an old scarf and wrap round it, so that if anybody knocked them.. That's used to go to what we called an oil shop sell all bits and pieces like that candles and thing but as I say could only have the gas on for a little while because mum couldn't afford to pay the bills.[22]

Only ten contributors said that their homes were lit by electricity when they were children and of these four said that they had moved from homes lit by gas, while two of the oldest respondents said that a mixture of candles and oil lamps had been use to light their childhood homes.

Electrification was on the whole a gradual and, to some extent, a hit and miss affair. By the early 1920s almost all new houses were being built with electric rather than gas lighting and it was often when families moved into these new council flats and houses that the children first came into direct contact with electric lighting. Even schools and public building were still lit by gas well into the 1930s. Some families did have electric lighting installed and several people recall the coming of electricity. Minnie remembered that her younger brother installed the first electric light in their home and the street:

> We only had gas mantles two gas mantles at the side of the fire place and we if we my mum sent us to buy one we had to be very careful how we carried it home because when you put it on you put a match to it and lit up with a flame and then after that you turn the gas on after you let it flame out and you used to light it that way two one each side of the fire place until my brother grew up I don't know how he learnt it because he was two years younger than me and he wired all one room, our one big room that we used to sit in and have our meals, and he put all the wiring round and he had to go to the town hall have somebody come down to inspect it to see if everything was Ok and then we was the only one in the street in Marian St that was in Hackney Rd that we had electric light.[23]

Generally, however, companies like the Fixed Price Light Company would install electrical cabling into your home and then for a fixed weekly payment supply you with electricity and, as Emily recalled, even replacement bulbs:

> The fixed light company you paid so much and when the light went in the kitchen you went up there took the bulb back and they give you a replacement bulb..[24]

This was made necessary because at the start of the period there were some seventy different companies providing electricity to London all working on different frequencies, voltages, and currents. Thus, the Fixed Price Light Company, for

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[22] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p2
[23] Interview with Minnie (b.1905) p2
[24] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p2

example, who were to survive into the early 1960s, supplied a direct current system at 110 volts.[25] This electrification did not however necessarily extend to the whole house. In the case of Emily's family they only had electricity downstairs and were still required to take a candle up to bed.

Throughout the period there were efforts to move people out of the worst of the slums and re-house them either in the new blocks of flats on new inner city housing estates being built by the local Borough Councils, or the LCC around the city, like those at Kennington Oval and Roman Road, or in the new houses of the new suburban housing estates that were being built at places like the LCC's giant Becontree estate in Essex which eventually housed 120,000 people, or the smaller estates at Downham in Kent and Roehampton in Surrey. The problem with these new estates was that they were often beyond the reach of the poorest sections of the working class both physically and economically. Tom McCarthy recalled that, despite having been condemned as unfit for human habitation some fifteen years before he was born, the residents of the Bunk refused to move out or to allow any but the bravest representatives of officialdom to enter their street. [26]

Moving to the new estates was an expensive business because the rents of these new modern properties were much higher than those of the old properties of the inner city. It was impossible for a large, or even medium sized, working-class family with an average income of £3 to £4 pounds a week to afford the rent let alone the extra travelling costs and time involved in moving away from where they worked. For poorer working-class families it was the flats that were built by progressive local councils like Southwark, Bermondsey and Poplar that were to provide a means of escaping the slums. Several of the contributors like Dusty recalled the delight they felt when moving to these new council homes with all their modern conveniences and appliances:

> We moved 1937 just before the war started. We moved round to a modern flat back of Albion Street, which is the south side of Rotherhithe Tunnel, just round the back which had modern conveniences. It had a Kitchenair, which was an appliance stove which had an oven that was heated by the fire and in the back pipes going through which heated up the water system

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[25] The national standard adopted by the National Electricity supply board and that used in the national grid was an alternating current at 240 volts (now 230 volts) with a maximum loading of 30 amps

[26] McCarthy's description of life in the bunk of the inter-war years bears a remarkable similarity to that recalled by Arthur Harding who was born in and recalled the life of the same sorts streets in the infamous East End 'Jago' in latter part of the nineteenth century. See Raphael Samuel, *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding* (London 1980) and Tom McCarthy *Boysie* (London 1986)

which gave us our hot water for the flat so we had baths and modern day device for that time.[27]

Generally however, it would seem that it was not to be until well after the mass destruction of working-class homes in the blitz that the majority of London's working-class families were to find themselves living in decent affordable homes.

1.2 Mum and Dad or Granny and Granddad

One of the key indicators of a family's social position was father's employment; what their fathers did for a living branded a child like nothing else. One of the most common questions asked of any child by a stranger was 'and what does your father do?' For most children their parent's employment played a key role in their lives not simply in the way that different incomes led to differences in the provision of physical necessities like food, clothing and shelter, but also in that it could affect their social position both within society as a whole but more importantly, their position within the stratifications of the working class. The lifestyle of a dock labourer's child would be totally different from that of a factory worker, or that of a skilled carpenter, and although they might all attend a council elementary school and all be lumped together by the social surveyors in the amorphous mass that was deemed to be the 'working class', their life experiences and educational opportunities would often be totally different.

Their home might be a couple of rooms in a shared house in a street full of shared houses, a purpose-built flat on one of the new council housing estates that were springing up across the city, or maybe a house with a back yard or a little patch of garden. But wherever they lived these were the children of the working class, marked out, by their dress, their physique, their accents, their eating habits, and their behaviour.

Parents were generally responsible for provision of material necessities but, in many cases, it was grandparents or other relatives that provided the less tangible, but equally important and well-remembered emotional support. Several of the contributors like Margaret N remember their grandparents and, in particular, their

[27] Interview with Dusty (b.1928) p2

grandmothers as rocks of emotional stability to whom they could turn for support while their parents were busy earning a living:[28]

> My Nan was always one that if you went to her you'd say 'oh Nan I've got tum ache' or 'I've got ear ache.' Nanny always had some kind of thing to make it go away. There was always something. I mean my Nan used to do lots of herbs and stuff like that and she'd always say 'sit down' and she could always find something that would ease that pain whatever it was. And I suppose more than the herbs it was the comfort that she gave to everybody. It was lovely it was smashing. I think when I talk about my family when I was younger, I think you will hear it was all my Nan that I talk about, very rarely my mum. Cos my mum was out working and it was always Nan we was with.[29]

For others, like Harry B, who had a negligent, drunken father, there was an uncle or aunt who lived nearby to whom they could turn for support and encouragement.

For most children 'parents' meant mother, because she was often the lynch pin of the family unit. In four of the families studied the fathers were either absent or dead but in each case the mothers strove to keep their families together. By contrast in the two families where a mother had either died or deserted the family, the loss of the mother led to the family breaking up and the children being farmed out to other relatives. So it would seem that mother was the keystone of the family unit: when mother left the family unit fell apart.

Who were these rocks of family life, what were they like, what did they do? Did they, as the popular image would have us believe, spend their lives at home cooking cleaning and caring for their husbands and children or did they have a life beyond the kitchen door?

From the survey conducted for this project it would seem that many working-class mothers worked outside as well as within the home. Out of the 31 people questioned on this topic, 16 reported that their mothers worked, 7 of them as part-time cleaners, 2 as cooks for private dinner parties, 6 of them worked in the garment industry in some form or other, one worked in a sausage factory and another as a part-time shop assistant, while one was unspecified; the contributor knew that his mother worked but did not know what she did. The most prosperous was Derrick's widowed mother who was able to support both of them comfortably through her work as a high-class furrier. Of the remaining 15 contributors, Joan was deserted by her mother and was brought up by her elderly grandparents while her older brothers remained with her father, and Ernie's mother died when he was eight years old and he was

[28] See also interview with Dusty (b.1929) p3 & Fred S (b.1928). For a discussion of the role of maternal grandmothers within working-class culture see Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford 1998) pp 164-176
[29] Interview with Margaret N (b.c.1930) p2

subsequently 'farmed off round the family', while of the other 13 mothers who stayed at home no less than ten had five or more children to care for.

These results seem to suggest that in London at least it was the norm rather that the exception for married working class women with children to work although more work would need to e done to confirm this. These figures seem to agree with the findings of Elizabeth Roberts who reported that according to the 1921 Census in Preston (one of three Lancastrian towns that she studied) 84.9% of women between 20 and 24, 61.0% of women between 25 and 34 and 43.8% of women between 35 and 44 were in full-time employment. She also found that in the other two towns she examined (Barrow and Lancaster) a large percentage of married working class women worked part-time.[30]

These findings were not confined to Lancashire. In her study of motherhood in London before the First World War Ellen Ross reported that, although the 1911 census had found only13% of married women to be employed, the figures in specific working-class districts were much higher, with 26% in Shoreditch, 24% in Holborn, and 22% in Bethnal Green. Ross went on to point out that the work of many married women went unreported by the census enumerators because, "the male 'household head' failed to mention it or because the census taker viewed the wife's work as insignificant."[31] These findings are also supported by the work of Miriam Glucksmann who has shown that many working-class mothers took on temporary jobs that were unlikely to appear in the official figures.[32]
These findings may perhaps reflect a sense of shame that the male householder was unable to support his wife and family and the attitude that a woman's place was in the home. These figures seem to be at odds with the national averages for married women's employment as reported in the 1911 and 1931 census where it was found that in 1911 only 6.8% of married women were working, while the figure had fallen to just 4.8% by 1931. This has led some historians like Diana Gittins to assume that the trend was for a reduction in the employment of married women as a result of a deliberate campaign to discourage mothers from going out to work.[33] From this study it would seem that in London, as in Barrow, Lancaster and Preston, many mothers did

[30] Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford 1984) pp 135-148
[31] Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (Oxford 1993) p 45
[32] Miriam Glucksmann, *Women Assemble: Women Workers and the New Industries in Inter-war Brirtain* (London 1990) pp 40-43
[33] Diana Gittins, *Fair Sex: Family Size and Structure 1900-1939* (London 1982)

in fact go out to work, but as Ellen Ross has postulated, because most working married women did so part-time, their labour went unreported, being considered to be insignificant, both by the census enumerators and the social surveyors of the period. The field workers for the *New Survey,* for example, were instructed that: 'All persons who habitually work for wages or profit *one full day* a week (my italics) or more are to be shown as occupied.' Thus effectively ignoring the part-time work that was generally done by women.[34]

That most working mothers did so only part-time can be deduced from the replies of the contributors who generally stated that mother was always there when they got home from school. In the few cases where mother worked full-time, there was, as in the case of Margaret N, always somebody waiting at home to greet the children when they returned from school. Indeed, Margaret N's granny seems to have acted not just as childminder for her family, but for the whole street:

> Our door was open all the time and all the kids in the street, and there must have bin a hell of a lot of them. Don't matter who it was, whose kid it was, they would all bang on my Nan's door. 'Nanny Lane were all going in to Nanny Lane' and they all came in, and had this soup and bread. Nan made her own bread, and she made, oh lovely bread.[35]

I found only one example of a 'latch key 'child. This was Alice W who was responsible for cooking the lunchtime meal for her younger siblings because her mother was working.

As will be shown below it would seem that for most things to do with the children, ranging from feeding and clothing to imparting standards of dress, manners and behaviour, it was mother who set the rules, and it was mother who took action when these standards were breached.

If mothers were always there, fathers were generally seen as remote figures often because of the long hours they worked. They were only truly members of the family at weekends and were to be avoided at other times.

The role of father in the working-class family seems to have been ambiguous; most contributors remember their fathers, like Fred M who, when asked how he got on with his father said, 'Very well, we never went short of nothing when we was kids, but he was always working…'[36] This view of father as the almost invisible provider who spent all of his time working was typical. Some of the contributors, however,

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[34] *New Survey of London Life and Labour* I p 414
[35] Interview with Margaret N (b. c1930) p3
[36] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p4

recall their fathers with an element of fear and even loathing that can seem quite shocking today. Harry B for example recalled his father as:

> 'A reprobate… he cared nothing for his family nor his children as long as he could be in a public house….he used to go to work on Wednesday night and we wouldn't see him again until a Tuesday… most of the time we didn't see him at home he was round the local pub.'[37]

Alice W described her stepfather as:

> Horrible, he never worked, and he drank, and everything was around him, and if you were hungry he still had his fish and chips at night and his beer money. I mean he had three children and he couldn't care anything like.. He had no feeling for his own children. He was a horrible time when he moved in but my mother got a separation when I was about 14.[38]

This last recollection highlights another problem of this time when divorce was almost unknown amongst the working class and legal separation, which thanks to change in legislation in1923, became much more common, was seen as a shameful act. In such an atmosphere it was almost impossible for a woman to get herself and her children away from a drunken or abusive husband. There were generally no support networks available to such women. The attitude of the time can be summed up by the phrase 'you have made your bed and now you must lie in it.'[39]

Generally it would seem that fathers, because of the long hours they worked, (usually between 48 and 55 hours per week) had very little contact with their children during the week and often only saw them at the weekends. This seems in many cases to have led to fathers being seen as distant figures in the memories of those interviewed. It also seems to have led, at least in some fathers, to an attitude of indifference and selfishness towards their families. Several of the contributors said things like: 'Oh he wasn't interested in us kids.' or 'He was selfish and he liked a drink.' or 'He was a racing man he liked his tanner win doubles.'[40] It would appear that most men gave their wives a fixed amount from their pay to support both themselves and their children; what was left was theirs to spend as and when they pleased, no matter what the needs of the family. Of course, not all men were like this. Some did take their responsibilities as fathers seriously and took an interest and an

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[37] Interview with Harry B (b.1925)

[38] Interview with Alice W (b.1915)

[39] According to F.M.L. Thompson in *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 : Volume I Regions and Communities* (Cambridge 1990) p31 By the early 1940s about 20,000 women a year were taking out maintenance orders; But it was not to be until a relaxing of the divorce laws in the late 1960s that divorce became common among the working-class.

[40] Interview with Fred P (b.1917) p 4 See also Interviews with Dusty, Rita, Fred S & Sam
Note 'a tanner win double' was a horse racing bet a tanner being slang for 6d

active part in their children's lives. Elizabeth W recalled the effort her father went to, to make a toy farm for her younger brother:

> My brother always wanted a farm so my father go this old tin tray bought some sand got it from where he worked some sand and he made all the little animals out of wood so my little brother could have a farm.[41]

Sam's father used to allow him to ride on the back of the steam wagon he drove, although in this case it may well have been out of necessity for with his mother and older siblings working, there was nobody else to look after Sam. Peter C's adoptive father used to arrange football and cricket matches on Clapham Common for Peter and his friends at the weekend, while Irene's father would take his daughters out to the park on Sundays.[42]

Some men of course did not have the option of regular daily contact with their children as, at a time of high unemployment they were, like Angela Rodaway's father, directed to work in specially constructed unemployment labour camps, only being allowed home to visit their families at weekends.[43]

Even if he took no interest in his children it was father's reputation that decided the family's status and position within a community a father's reputation could be influenced by a number of factors, the main one and the one used in the *New Survey* to determine a family's class, was his job. What father did for a living had a pivotal role in determining a family's social standing. Even if he had a 'good', well-paid job, a man's reputation and that of the family could be affected by his personal habits. If he was, for example, a drinker, or a gambler or he had a reputation as a wife beater or a thief the standing of the family and the children would be affected.

There were, of course, other things that influenced a family's reputation. Did, for example, the children appear to be clean and tidy. In rougher areas the occasional infestation of head lice was, as will be shown below, considered a normal childhood problem while in a more refined district the presence of nits in a child's hair could result in that child and indeed the whole family being ostracised; while in better areas it was the highest mark of shame if a child was brought before the Juvenile Courts. In rougher parts of the capital an appearance before the Juvenile Magistrates was just another of the hazards of growing up, with those who were not periodically arrested being seen as the exception rather than the rule.

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[41] Interview With Elizabeth W (b.1925) p7

[42] Interviews with Sam (b.1916) p 3 Peter C (b.1921) & Irene (b.1928) p 5

[43] Angela Rodaway, *A London Childhood* (London 1960) pp74-75

Children soon learnt their position within the social hierarchy of both their own community and the much broader context of society as a whole. How did this process take place? For as Joanna Bourke points out children are not born with a class identity, rather it is something that they develop as they grow up.[44] How did they learn their place within society? The simple answer to this question is that, as with so many other aspects of their lives, they were taught by adults. Children were often told not to play with others because they were 'dirty' or 'not nice' or 'not like us' they soon learnt to recognise signs of social difference. Harry B, for example knew that his first home in Camden Town was at the wrong end of the street (see above). As will be shown below things like the way others were dressed or the way their hair was cut could be, and often was, used as an indicator of social position. Angela Rodaway recalled that when she got lost at the age of five she was found by a 'Lady' who took her to the police station. She recognised that the woman was a 'Lady' because she was wearing gloves and only 'ladies wore gloves'[45] It was not simply dress that marked out an individual as coming from a particular social background as George Bernard Shaw pointed out in *Pygmalion* an English man was labelled as soon as he opened his mouth. These social distinctions were, as will also be shown below, reinforced by society as a whole most particularly in the forms of education and social welfare, which were often provided more on the basis of perceived social position than need.[46]

<u>1.3 Knowing Your Place: The child's role within the family</u>

If parents were the most important influence on a child's life then the number, relative age, and sex of their siblings was next. The position of an individual child within the family framework was the key to determining how that child viewed his or her family. The experiences of the youngest child of a large family could be completely different from those of the eldest. In very large families it was not uncommon for the youngest children not to know their older siblings who might well have left home to establish their own families before their youngest brothers and sisters were born. In one case studied for this project the subject's older siblings had not only left the family home, but had emigrated to Australia! Alice W's elder siblings went to live with their

[44] Joanna Bourke, *Working-class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London 1994) pp 3-4

[45] Angela Rodaway, *A London Childhood p 56*

[46] For an examination of the relationship between class and education see Ross MacKibbin *Class and Cultures: England 1918-1951* pp206-271

paternal grandparents after their widowed mother remarried and started a second family with her new husband leaving Alice, who was the youngest child from the first marriage, to grow up within the new family framework.[47]

The oldest child from a large family, it could be argued, had all of the disadvantages of a large number of siblings with none of the advantages. If they were female they were likely to be required to care for their younger siblings. If they were male they were the ones called upon to protect their younger brothers on the street and in the school playground, but they had no one to call on for help.

The middle child, it could be argued, had the best and the worst childhood experiences. They were required to care for their younger brothers and sisters while at the same time being able to call upon the support of their older siblings. The youngest child might be the family's favourite because he or she was the baby, or the oldest might be the favourite because he or more often she was mother's help and surrogate. The middle child tended to be the one to be overlooked; they were just there, a part of the family, expected to do their share of the household work, but without the central role so often taken by the oldest or youngest child. It was the middle child who would know, or at least remember, all members of the family having been cared for by older siblings, who might subsequently have left the family home, and having cared for younger siblings.

The people in this study come, as might be expected in any random sample, from across the whole spectrum of family structures, background and strata of the working class, They ranged from the children of the unemployed and unemployable, through dock labourers to the children of skilled craftsmen and factory foremen, from being only children, to being members of very large and indeed extended families. (The largest nuclear family encountered had eleven surviving children.)

Table 1.3 size of contributors families taken from the interviews

No Siblings	1	2-3	4-5	6-7	8+
No Contributors	6	7	5	6	5

So what was it like to be the eldest child in a large family? The answer to this question seems to depend firstly on gender and secondly on the family's position within the working class. If you were a girl like Amy who had ten or eleven siblings (she could not remember exactly how many brothers and sisters she had) then it

[47] See interviews with Rosina (b.1916) & Alice W (b.1915)

would seem to have been an unremitting round of hard work and baby minding .She recalled her reaction when her mother produced yet another baby:

> In those days there was no birth control or anything else. My mother didn't want all those kids poor soul she was worn out. Every year, every eighteen months there was a baby. As I come up the stairs I didn't known anything, you wasn't supposed to know. And I used to smell this disinfectant, and I used to think 'oh another dammed kid'. She should have heard me she would have killed me. Yes we all had to go in then and we saw the new baby, oh and nearly all boys, my sister come when I was ten, had to cart her about everywhere.[48]

This illustrates another problem with being a member of a large family for, although her father had a reasonably well-paid and respectable job (police officer), under the Metropolitan Police regulations his wife was not allowed to work. His income, while being comparatively high, was not sufficient to support such a large family, and so this particular family was forced to live in poverty, simply because of its size. Both Booth and the authors of the *New Survey* recognised that low wages, and or large families, were one of the main causes of childhood poverty. This suggested that a family's experience of poverty was cyclic. The notion of a *poverty cycle* was first developed by Seebohm Rowntree in his study of York published in 1901.[49] He stated that, as a family grew it gradually slipped deeper and deeper into poverty until the eldest children started work and began to contribute to the household thus halting, or even reversing the process, so that while the working children remained at home the family's financial situation improved and continued to do so as each successive child left school and the older children left to form families of their own.

If the birth of a brother or sister was sometimes seen as a burden by their older siblings the loss of a baby brother or sister could also have a major impact on the lives of the rest of the family:

> My mum lost a couple of children due to ill health. She had rheumatic fever, that's another thing they didn't tell you years ago, so she lost two babies... There was three and half years difference between me, and my sister, but there wouldn't have been if they had lived. It was just as well they didn't, my mum couldn't have afforded to have kept them anyway.[50]

Seven of the contributors reported that they had lost one or more siblings, three of them through accidents. Harry's brother, for example, was killed in a road accident on his way home from his first day at school, while the other four lost siblings to diseases like rheumatic fever.[51] The death of a child, especially that of an older child, could leave a lasting impression on a family. Dorothy's mother, for

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[48] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p3

[49] B.S Rowntree, *Poverty A Study of Town Life 3rd Ed* (London 1910) pp 380-382

[50] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p3

[51] See interviews with Amy, Dusty, Elizabeth W, Fred M, Fred S, Harry B, and Marion.

example, refused to stay in their new house in Millwall after the death of her son from meningitis, forcing the family to move back to rejoin the rest of their friends and family in the heart of the East End.[52]

As will be discussed below, (see Chapter 3) this was a period before the Welfare State, so parents were often reluctant to call a doctor if their child was sick for fear of the expense. Even when the doctor was finally called, in an age before the discovery of antibiotics, it was often too late, and there was little that could be done to treat a very sick child.

If Amy's life seems to have been an unremitting round of housework and baby-minding life was very different for her brothers whom, she recalled, her mother 'never bothered'. Amy described her mother as 'old fashioned' because she did not believe that helping out around the house was boy's work, so Amy's brothers were very much free to do what they liked.

Anna Davin described children before the First World War as 'mother's auxiliaries in the incessant round of cleaning, cooking and servicing the home.'[53] This role of children as mother's helper persisted throughout the inter-war period with most children being required to perform some form of household chore. These were not only seen as a necessary contribution towards a family's well being but also, at least in the case of girls, as providing a key part of a child's education. Elizabeth Roberts describes this attitude towards girl's domestic work as 'a kind of apprenticeship for motherhood.'[54] The attitude of most working-class mothers seems to have been that it was a mother's duty to train her daughters in the domestic duties that would be required of them when they in turn married and had a household of their own to run.

The number and types of jobs that an individual child might be required to perform depended on a number of factors: firstly there was the child's age, quite young children would be given simple tasks to perform. When asked about doing jobs around the home, Amy said: 'Until I was five or six I might be given the baby, not to hold, but to rattle things in front of, to stop it squeaking.'[55] Dusty remembered that;- 'the moment you could move you was all given jobs.'[56]

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[52] Interview with Dorothy (b.1927) p1
[53] Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor* p175
[54] Elizabeth Roberts, *A Woman's Place* pp 22-25
[55] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p 9
[56] Interview with Dusty (b.1928) p 5

The second factor was an individual child's position within the family structure. It was generally the case that the older the child the more he or she was required to do. Alice S, for example, recalled that her older sister did more about the home than she did simply because, as she explained, her sister was older. Alice W on the other hand, was expected to act as surrogate mother to her half brothers and sisters while her mother worked to support the family:

> My youngest brother I was like a mother to him being the middle I mean he used to call me for anything if he wanted anything done, and I used to have to take him to school and bring them back and cook the dinner in my dinner hour.[57]

The third factor was gender. In most families girls seem to have been required to do more about the home than their brothers because, as mentioned above, helping out about the home was seen as good training for a girl's future life as a homemaker and mother.

The fourth factor governing the amount and nature of an individual child's participation in household work was family size.[58] Large families had lots of children available to help, but there was also the constant supply of work to be done. There were always potatoes to peel, dishes to wash, and babies or younger brothers and sisters to be cared for. Some jobs did have their advantages, but mother was always on hand to see that children did not take too many liberties:

> We had to shell peas and the little potatoes. You had to scrape you used to sit out in the yard and my sister used to eat more than she shelled and my mum said to her in the end 'you sing or you whistle while you are doing that'.[59]

In many families it was the eldest daughter who became mother's surrogate taking responsibility, at what might seem today a very young age, for the care of her younger brothers and sisters.

In some families there was the opportunity for the youngest child, or a child like Alice W's older sister who was thought to be particularly bright, to avoid housework altogether:

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[57] Interview With Alice W (b.1915) p 3

[58] By the early 1920s many women were practicing birth control and family sizes were becoming progressively smaller only in Catholic families whose religion forbad the use of birth control and in the roughest elements of the working-class were large families still common. A further point should be made here that is the relationship between large families and poverty for it is obvious that the larger the family the greater the chances that they will be in poverty as family incomes had to stretch further this is particularly true in the early years when the family might have several children under school aged this would hamper mothers ability to go out to work and so restrict the family to fathers income so that even if father had a well paid job the family might still end up in poverty simply because of the number of mouths to feed.

[59] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p4

I'd have to do the outside loo and the back yard swill it down once a week and the kitchen. And I used to do all the shopping because I was the middle one and the sister next to me that was the older one she went to high school so she was always studying and doing things like that. And the other one was working then so I used to look after the three younger than me. [60]

In small families, children of whatever sex were required to play their part in performing household chores, especially where mother worked. As Peter C, who was an only child, recalled:

> I had to do all the shopping, polish the floor, we used to have lino in those days, didn't have carpet in those days, just used to have mats. I had to polish that and polish the floor that's mostly what I had to do. Go and get the errands, the vegetables, and the other sorts of stuff but that was. I can always remember dusting and polishing, forget and that was it, whack.[61]

As mentioned above, in large families older children tended to be required to do more about the home than their younger siblings and that this was particularly so if they were girls. Even so, in most large family units everybody was expected to help out in some way. Gender segregation, however, was very evident in many poorer families; the boys were expected to contribute by helping with the heavy or dirty jobs like cleaning the cutlery, black leading the kitchen range, cleaning out the grate, fetching coke or shopping, while girls were generally expected to help with the cleaning, the childcare and routine household work, as Minnie remembered:

> We all had our little jobs. The boys had to throw all water down in the back yard, and we had a table out there and one of the boys had to clean all the cutlery. Cos you had to clean it all then, no just, you know, washing it. And it used to shine. They was old fashioned heavy as well the cutlery what we used to use and they all had to be cleaned and washed after one of us would wash them another one would dry them and you know we all had our little. I had to clean windows, sit outside the windows, cos we had the old fashioned windows that you had to lift up with a sash I used to clean the windows. I think the youngest one got away with it she was the only one, but we all had our jobs to do.[62]

It was only when children went out to work that they were allowed to escape the routines of household chores. In Fred S's family chores were awarded on an age and seniority basis thus, as Fred recalled, when an older sibling left school and started in full-time work, their chores would be awarded to the next in line and so everybody would move up a job:

> As you got older as someone else went to work the next one took over. And my job was shopping used to hate that. I used to go down Goldhawk Road do some shopping at the market stalls. Then I walk along the ha'pnny steps to the co-op and get some stuff from there course in those days you got a divi so we had to go there save a couple of bob.[63]

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[60] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) p3
[61] Interview with Peter C (b.1927) p 9
[62] Interview with Minnie (b.1905) pp 4-5
[63] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) p 6

But even after they had left school, children could still be called upon to help out if their younger siblings were not available; it was only when they were about eighteen that they could say no but, even then, as Emily recalled, her older siblings still had to respect their parents:

> They (her older siblings) was at work if there was any jobs that needed doing and we weren't there then they had to do it. It was only when they was about 18 that they could say no let them do it but you never answered mum back no you wouldn't dare answer dad back.[64]

Some of the tasks allotted to children were very responsible. Fred S, for example, was entrusted to deliver the families sick club contributions:

> Of an evening, me job, all rest of the family paid in to a sick club...and I used to have to go and pay all the family all the lot over the steps church called the its been rebuilt now ...used to go there an also they had another one I used to go I don't know why we had two sick clubs that was at the Emanuel that was called the Western Sick Club. I used to go and pay that one and at Christmas time they had a share out they'd pay out the funds to the people that were sick and if there was a surplus it was shared out amongst the members that was like a Christmas treat I had to go there and collect all this money it was a lot of money for me to carry a kid but I did alright cos everybody used to give me six pence course in those days was very good that was my wages for doing it all year round was 6d a head. [65]

In some families, particularly in those like James and Marion's, which had a majority of girls, boys were not expected to perform any domestic duties beyond running the odd errand because, as Amy, who also came from a family which included several girls, explained when asked if her younger brothers helped with the domestic work:

> No she (her mother) never bothered them she was old fashioned that wasn't a boys work. No she wouldn't have that so they had a pretty good life really.'[66]

This attitude that housework was women's work seems to have persisted throughout the period. In some families, like those of Fred M, and Sam, the boys were only expected to help with the 'manly' tasks like gardening or the annual Easter ritual of whitewashing the back yard.[67] In others, a mother's particular favourite (often the youngest) might well be excused household chores, but this seems to have been rare. Emily's mother, when faced with her son's refusal to do something that he felt was girl's work, best sums up the general attitude of mothers towards their children's labour within the home:

> Mum said to him 'I want you to wash up' 'me wash up' he said 'but I am a boy' mum said 'you surprise me son' he said ' but that's girls work' so she said 'do you eat in this house' so he said 'yes' so she said 'you live here you eat you drink you go to bed' so he says 'yes' so

[64] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p5
[65] Interview with Fred S (b. 1921) p 6
[66] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p9
[67] See Interviews with Fred M (b.1928) p5 & Sam (b.1916) p4

she said 'you do the same as the girls then you are no different, if you want to be different out' No our mum didn't believe in anything like that.[68]

One of the most important tasks that children were often entrusted with was shopping, particularly when it might involve queuing. It was quite common for children to be sent out with as specific list of things to get from particular shops, mother giving the child the exact money to make their purchases. There were some errands that were particularly sought after, with brothers and sisters vying for the privilege of going to the shop:

> If you got jam, we used to have to take a cup to the hardware shop, and that was in Bethnal Green Rd, they called it Jersey Street it run parallel with Treadway Street, before you got in to Jersey Street, and they used to weigh the cup on the scales then they had a great big stone jar on the counter and they used to spoon it up put it in the cup and weigh it. And all the way home you'd be (licking her fingers). My brother used to say 'I'll go mum I'll go mum 'because we used to lick it and it was a luxury to us. [69]

Some parents would encourage their children to a little self-enterprise while out shopping, especially in the street markets, where small hands might help to fill the family pot free of charge:

> She (mother) used to give us the money to go to the butchers in Bethnal Green Road. I am being truthful when I am talking to you. Every time we went behind some of the stalls, because there wasn't a lot of money, she used to tell us to pick up some of the cabbage.[70]

Overall there seems to have been little change in the pattern of children's domestic chores from those reported by Davin for the pre First World War period. Children both before and after the war were required to do the bulk of the family's shopping in the form of a continuous round of errands, running for a penny worth of this and two penny worth of that. The only noticeable change in this pattern was in the task of fetching beer; before 1914 it had been common practice to send children to the local pub which, because of the light emanating from inside was also a favourite playground, to fetch a jug of beer.[71] In the post-war period, because of the new licensing laws, the practice had to be modified, and woe be tide the child that broke the rules as Amy recalled:

> I used to have to go and get his pint off beer out of the off licence and in those days when you went you had to take a bottle. And the off licence, when it was somebody under 14, used to put a bit of sticky plaster right over the top of the bottle and stick it down. And if I went home

[68] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p5
[69] Interview with Minnie (b.1905) p9
[70] Interview with Marion (b.1923) p 3 See also interview with Fred M (b.1928) p9
[71] Anna Davin, *Growing up Poor,* pp183-185

with that broken I'd get a clout, because you see that was put on for parents to know who sent the child it hadn't been drinking it...[72]

There seem to have been only one major change in the pattern of, and parental attitudes towards, children's chores. Both Ellen Ross and Anna Davin record examples of children being kept at home from school on Mondays to look after the baby or to help mother with the washing. I found only two examples of this. Alice W (b.1915) and Amy (b.1908) who recalled that she was kept at home on washdays:

> Monday morning they was in the copper boiling up (dirty clothes) I don't know how I didn't get scalded that boiling water boiling all up. And I use to get the thing and get it out bit by bit and put it in the bath I used to scrub. Good job I never had an accident with it boiling water. And she'd keep it there for a while and then she'd put the whole lot in the sink and wash it all out. I hated washing days then there was the ironing to do I wouldn't do that because we had the old fashioned iron. The old iron course now days you got electric irons then they brought a shield out for an iron but it wasn't hot enough for her she wouldn't have that so she used to have the old iron.[73]

It would seem that the practice of keeping children at home to help out on washdays was declining so that, by the end of the period, although children were still required to help with the heavy washday work, they were no longer kept at home from school, but rather, were expected to help when they got home as Gwen recalled:

> By the time I was 7 or 8 I was cooking, and I would clean up in the house help with washing my mother used to wash on a Monday we had an old mangle I remember putting blankets through it. 74

Not all working-class mothers washed at home. For the more affluent and those without washing facilities, there was always the 'bag wash'. Again as Alice W recalled, it was often the task of a child to take the bundle of dirty washing, which according to her could weigh up to 28 lbs (13 Kg,), to the local laundry where for 2/6- (12 ½ p) it would be washed, and the taken home to be dried and ironed:

> I used to work very hard when I was at school you know living in St John's Wood I'd carry a big bag a 28lb bag of washing what they used to call bag wash it used to be washed for I think 2/6-. That's when we moved to this little place with two rooms there was no washing facilities or anything, and then when you collected it, and it was all wet and my age then was 12, and I was carrying this 28lb of washing from Marylebone to St John's wood which is quite a walk but your mother told you to do it and that's it.[75]

What was the attitude of these children to the work they were expected to perform within the home? The answer to this question seems like so many others to

[72] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p6
[73] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p 8
[74] See interviews with Alice W (b.1915) p 5-6 & Gwen (b.1935) p4
[75] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) p13

depend on several factors. The key factors seem to have been a combination of gender and the task that the child was required to perform. Many girls seem, like Joan, to have taken a pride in being able to help out around home as it made them feel grown up and gave them a sense of being needed. The most highly prized job was being entrusted with cooking. This was one task that mothers generally kept to themselves. The risks of spoiling valuable food due to the inexperienced efforts of a child were, at a time when food was often difficult to provide, simply too great. Thus when, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, a girl was finally let loose in the kitchen, it marked her promotion into the adult world. Boys on the other hand appear to have resented being made to perform tasks that they saw as girl's or women's work although they were often willing to perform the heavy and dirty jobs like cleaning the grate, fetching firewood, or coke, because these could be portrayed as manly.

1.4 Dinner Time

The diet of working-class children seem to have depended on a number of things beyond personal likes and dislikes, which, in an environment where food could often be hard to come by, were generally discouraged.

The first seems to have been family size, because, of course, the larger the family, the more mouths there were to feed, and so the further father's pay had to stretch. This brings us on to the second factor, that of income, and the third, the family's position within the working class, for the higher up the social scale a family was, the higher their income was likely to be, and so conversely the smaller the family size. Finally, of course, there is the area that was of most concern to social reformers and welfare workers throughout the period, the skill of working-class mothers as cooks and household managers.

The ability of working-class women to provide cheap and nutritious meals for their families had been a matter of concern to the middle-class social reformers from the late nineteenth century. Both Booth and Rowntree identified poor household management skills as being one of the prime causes of malnutrition and apparent poverty amongst the working class. By the start of the inter-war period it was normal practice for all girls to be taught the basics of cookery and housewifery at school. Still, the *New Survey* found that in many households mothers were not providing what the welfare professionals considered to be suitable healthy meals for their families.

Why was this? The answer was simple. Mothers provided the food that their families liked and would eat. It was irrelevant that the professionals recommended using rice and pulses when a mother knew that the only way her children would eat rice was in a pudding, and that they would not touch pulses, except perhaps in things like peas puddings or stews. There is throughout the literature of the time a continual complaint that Londoners were addicted to meat, that they ate substantially more meat than similar families in other parts of the country, and that it was this addiction to flesh that was blamed for the comparatively large proportion of London's working class who were found to be living in poverty.

Food is, of course, an emotive issue. Both Ellen Ross and Anna Davin reported that, in general, the working members of the family benefited from what Marvin Harris calls the 'Bread Winner Effect' in which working members of the family, and in particular fathers, were better fed than non-working family members.[76] It would seem from the oral history interviews conducted for this study that, in London at least, there was a shift away from this idea during the inter-war period. Only four of the contributors said that their fathers had different meals to the rest of the family, and two of these, Amy and Alice W, were amongst the oldest subjects:[77]

> My mother used to lay the table at night all the boys had be in bed or out and er I used to be the waitress used to lay the table for him I never got any of the food just for him because he was the what you call it one that got the money in so to speak top dog he was and er she would cook a little supper for him with a little sweet then he'd have his pint of beer...[78]

Generally then it would seem from this evidence that there had been a culture shift with regard to priority being given to the breadwinner. Elizabeth Roberts went further stating that in some households mothers would deliberately go without food in order to provide for their children. I found only one example of a parent giving up their meal to supplement their children's diet. When her father was unemployed Irene was provided with free school meals. However her father knew she did not like them so:

> We used to have to go to the school with these little tickets you know to get our meals and I didn't like them and I know one day my dad came behind he was just going to sign on at Frederick Rd I always remember the name of the place and he was going to sign on and he see me and my mate walking along and he brought us home and my mum and dad give me their dinner rather than see me go without because I didn't like the school dinners[79]

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[76] Marvin Harris *Good to Eat* quoted in Ellen Ross *Love and Toil* p33
[77] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) pp 4-5 & 7
[78] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p6
[79] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p5

That this is the only example I found of parents giving up their own meal to their child and this seems to have been a one-off, spur of the moment thing, rather than the regular practice of parental sacrifice in favour of their children. This does not mean that it did not happen in other families, but rather that if it did then the children did not know about it.

There was one tradition that continued throughout the inter-war period and beyond and that was the Sunday dinner. Almost all of the contributors, no matter how poor their backgrounds, recalled that Sunday dinner was sacrosanct, with spending on other meals being sacrificed to provide a roast dinner on Sunday:

> We used to have a breakfast before we went to school you had to be in school at 9 o'clock 12 till 2 was the lunchtime so we used to go home to lunch and we'd have our hot dinner then and then about 5 or half past we'd have a couple of slices of bread and that and on Sunday we'd have cakes and that after tea as well we always has a roast dinner Sunday even if you didn't have a roast dinner all the week you always had a roast dinner Sunday. [80]

Only two contributors said that they did not have a special Sunday dinner. In one case this was because the family were Jewish, while Peter's widowed mother simply could not afford to buy even the cheapest joint of meat.[81] But the Sunday roast was not just for Sunday. In most households the remains of the meat, and indeed the vegetables, would, as Alice W and others recalled, be served up again on Monday:

> On a Sunday my mother would get a joint on Saturday for Sunday then we'd have it hot on Sunday cold on Monday then she would sort of hash it up on Tuesday on Wednesday well whatever there was and Friday was always fish because my stepfather was a Catholic. [82]

Another tradition that survived into the inter-war years in the poorest parts of the capital was, as both Emily and George recalled, taking the Sunday roast to the bakers shop to be cooked:

> The Sunday dinner already laid on a dish on a tray potatoes in the bottom meat on top I used to carry it from St James's Place to the other end that was a bakers shop used to take them there and the man in charge he had an old pole with like a shoe on the end like a shovel and you go in and he'd put your tray in he' d put like a square metal at the end slide it right back put a number on there and give you a number I remember so well that I used to have to go and collect that every Sunday I go down get the dinner carry it over a bit of cloth to hold it and walking Through St James's Place my neighbours would come out had a white cloth over the top of the dinner and as I was walking down my neighbours would come out and as walking down they would lift the cloth the white cloth of and take a potato oh I remember that so well.[83]

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[80] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p4

[81] From autobiographical evidence it would seem that while Jewish families did not indulge in the traditional Sunday roast they did have a large meal on Friday night to mark the start the start of the Sabbath.

[82] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) p5

[83] Interview with George (b.1920) p5

This might at first sight seem surprising, for most families had a perfectly good gas cooker at home; but it was actually a matter of good sound economics because, as Emily pointed out, it cost 2d to get Sunday dinner cooked at the bakers, while it could cost anything up to 4d to cook it at home.[84] Minnie recalled how her mother and a neighbour cooperated to save money by sharing her mother's oven and so halving costs of cooking:

> My mum used to make a great big dish of bread pudding and it used to come out put a penny in the gas and neighbour next door used to call me and I used to have to stand on a little stool over the fence see take her bread pudding as well and they used to put in my mum's oven. My mum put it in her oven. See for that penny she'd cook the two of them. Used to put a penny in the gas meters then and er that's what we used to have for our dinner a great big lump of bread pudding.[85]

The tradition of Sunday dinner could lead to conflict within the family especially when, as Fred S recalled, it clashed with another Sunday tradition that of father's lunchtime trip to the pub:

> Sunday was different story because that was the one day when my mother would get a bit annoyed because we'd all be there for our Sunday lunch which was round about 1 o'clock but as I say my dad used to go round and feed the horse down the stables then he'd pop down for his drink in the pub he never got drunk but he would always stay until 2 so it was always a question of putting his dinner on a hot plate you know.[86]

If Sunday dinner could lead to conflict, Sunday high tea, which was another of those great working class traditions that continued throughout the inter-war period and beyond, seems to have been used to bring families together. Children would be taken to visit grandparents or uncles and aunts for high tea or relatives would come and visit them. Both Sunday dinner and high tea were seen as symbols of respectability by the working classes. Both meals were performed in imitation of the middle and upper classes, whose habits many working-class mothers had observed while working as servants in their youth. According to Ellen Ross some families who had nothing for Sunday dinner even went so far as to rattle their empty plates and cutlery to keep up the pretence.[87] This reinforces the notion that it was important for a family's social position to keep up the pretence of genital respectability even when economic stringencies made this practically impossible. It would seem likely that parental concerns about keeping up appearances and imitating their social superiors

[84] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p4
[85] Interview with Minnie (b.1905) p4
[86] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) p4
[87] Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil p 39*

would have gone some way to reinforcing children's notions of class and their own social position within their own and the wider community.

So what did the working-class children eat? This, like so many other questions relating to this subject, would seem to depend on the on the type of family that children came from. At the poorest end of the spectrum those like Margaret N and Dorothy seem to have subsisted on a mixture of stews and thick soups made with cheap vegetables and meat scraps, or a few penny worth of bones:

> I used to go and get the dinner in right 3d for meat 2d for potatoes and 1d for cabbage and that would give us a dinner seven of us... my mum used to get a breast of lamb and bake it and baked potatoes another time she'd make a stew.[88]

At the other extreme, those that came from the more affluent, skilled working-class families seem to have had what might be considered to be much more balanced diet, but from whatever background they came, it would seem that London's working-class children had a diet with a comparatively high meat, or at least fat content. Particular favourites remembered by many of the contributors were dripping toast or dripping sandwiches. These were made from the congealed fat and meat juices left over after cooking Sunday dinner spread on bread:

> On Sunday when they had the roast beef and that they kept the dripping see you can't do it now with what the give yer you don't get no nice fat round it they used to be all the lovely dripping in the dish in the winter we had we had the fire winter and summer... dripping toast lovely.[89]

Other childhood favourites included such delicacies as jam or sugar sandwiches, while no outing to the park, or anywhere else, was complete without a bottle of sherbet lemonade.

Children from smaller and better off homes seem to have had more nutritious and better balanced meals, although almost every meal seems to have contained meat or fat in some form or another, as Harry B (whose father was a foreman) recalled:

> Right from a small child Breakfast wasn't much in the earlier days it was usually a couple of slices of bread and butter with if you were lucky a bit of jam or treacle. My favourite in those days was bread and dripping everybody liked bread and dripping probably that's the reason I ended up with a heart attack but still you never know. Yes I loved bread and dripping for a breakfast it was a good thing I think to go to school on. Lunch times of course we always came home from school we ran all the way home quickly had a meal or a snack sandwich or some thing like that then run all the way back to school cause there was no school meals in those days and in the evening when father was at home we usually had a meal about six o'clock that was usually a bit of meat of some kind, he had a friend who was a butcher he'd known him all his life virtually and his butcher friend always managed to get us a bit of the cheaper cuts of meat like scrag end of lamb belly of pork it was all cheap stuff but it was good

[88] Interview with Dorothy (b.1927) p 5
[89] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p4

> filling very fatty usually but we always had a bit of meat and some vegetable of some sort daily didn't change much on Sundays it was more or less the same sort of food but I say Father was lucky I say cos up to the outbreak of war he was in a good job.[90]

Other foods fondly remembered included chops, fish and chips, liver and bacon, and for tea things like rice pudding with jam and jelly and custard, while on Sunday, homemade cakes, watercress or cucumber sandwiches and winkles seem to have been features of most high teas.

Generally then, it would seem that the diet of children from larger or poorer families tended to contain high levels of fillers like fats and carbohydrates which would stave off the pains of hunger but which, because they were lacking in proteins vitamins and minerals, often left children malnourished and prone to disease (see chapter 4). The diet of children from smaller or better off families on the other hand seems to have been much better, although still lacking in fruit, on the whole it seems to have provided most of the essentials for healthy development.[91] Whatever the nutritional values, most people remember the food of their childhood with fondness. Many of the contributors regretted that they no longer had the sorts of meals that they remembered from childhood.

1.5 Wait Till Your Father Gets Home

One of the most important factors in determining the social standing of a family within the working class community was the behaviour of the children, both within and outside the home; but who was responsible for setting the standards of behaviour? What were those standards, and did they vary between different sections of the working class? Who was responsible for the disciplining of errant children, and what sorts of punishments were imposed?

Outside the home children's behaviour was governed by a combination of authorities ranging from their teachers and the education authorities to the local police and their interpretation of the law. Inside the home, contrary to the popular image, it was, as Davin, Roberts and Ross have all shown, mother who set the standards of behaviour. Although fathers might have some say over certain aspects of their children's behaviour, it was mother whose word generally was law. It was the women of the community who, through a mixture of gossip, complaints, and actions like

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[90] Interview with Harry B (b.1928) p5

[91] Very few of the contributors mentioned fruit, in one case the contributor was talking about stealing apples and in the others fruit was only mentioned as a special treat at Christmas.

ostracising those whose activities deviated from the accepted norms, set the standards to be followed within a particular area. For example, while it might be acceptable in one area for children to be playing out on the street after dark in the wintertime, in another children were expected to be indoors by the time darkness fell. Thus Irene who lived in Canning Town recalled that, in the wintertime, all of the children had to be off the street by five o'clock[92]. Peter C who came from a respectable working -class family in Battersea recalled that he had to be indoors and in bed by eight o'clock winter and summer, while on the other hand, as mentioned above, George, who came from a lower working-class family in Stepney, recalled that he was, in his own words, 'a roamer' who would not come home till two or three in the morning.[93]

Both the social status of, and the area from which a family came, also seem to have played a part in determining what was, and what was not, deemed acceptable conduct for children. Continuing the example of children's bedtimes, from the oral history evidence it would appear that children from lower social groups, and those living in poorer districts, were allowed to stay out later and had later bedtimes than those in more affluent areas. Thus as mentioned above George, who came from a lower working-class family in Stepney in the East End, was allowed to stay out until 2 or 3am:

> I was a roamer I never came home till two three o'clock in the morning, me and my mates and that fire was still a light and the oven was hot and my mum used to put my dinner in the oven and I'd take it out nice and hot.[94]

Harry B on the other hand who came from a skilled working-class family in the respectable area of Brixton was, even as a teenager, subject to strict control:

> Up to about the age of seven I was always in bed at six o'clock and from the age of seven onwards I think it was gradually relaxed an half an hour as each year went on But I can't remember going to bed later than about nine o'clock and that was...when I was thirteen, fourteen.[95]

While Rita who came from an upper working-class family, recalled that she had to be in her bedroom by six o'clock:

> As a child I was in bed by six o'clock even though other children were playing in the street my mother said up to bed you can have anything you like in that bedroom but you are not going to be on that street.[96]

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[92] Interview with Irene (b.1928)
[93] Interview with Peter C (b.1921) p8 George (b.1920) p2
[94] Interview with George (b.1920) p2
[95] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p6
[96] Interview with Rita (b.1928) p4

Of course some children's bedtimes were determined by other factors. Elizabeth W and her brother and sister were put to bed early because her mother went out to work in the evening:

> We had to go to bed early because my mum had to do this night job of cleaning up in the café we were bathed we had this big zinc bath and my dad would bath us I can always remember him doing my hair and he would wash it and plait it and we'd get bathed and put into bed and I can remember hearing the other children playing out in the square and I used to said why can't we stop up and play out and they used to said why are you in bed and we're out playing cos we'd sneak a look out the window we weren't supposed to we were on the ground floor.[97]

What other factors influenced the standards of behaviour that were expected of children? In general it seems that girls were subject to stricter controls than boys. Older children were expected to behave better than younger children, although children were expected to know the difference between right and wrong at a very young age, and, as was shown above, the higher up the social scale a family was the stricter were those controls. Some parents took these controls to the extreme as Rita who came from an upper working-class family recalled:

> I could go to the cinema but, my father, if I wanted to go from school my father always collected me and took me he'd be waiting he'd take me to the cinema at the Odeon at Mile End and he waited outside till I came out unfortunately he wouldn't let me out of his sight.[98]

Who then was responsible for imposing discipline on children within the home? Generally mothers were not only responsible for setting the standards of behaviour but for disciplining children who broke the rules. Fathers, while being held up as the ultimate figure of authority, tended, as in so many other aspects of their children's lives, to defer to their wives in the matter of discipline, particularly when it came to dealing with their daughters. Of the 31 people questioned for this study, 18 said that their mothers were responsible for discipline within the home, 7 reported that it was their father who disciplined them and, of these 6 were male. Only 3 of the contributors said that their parents took joint responsibility for punishing the children.[99] Thus although the phrase 'wait till your father gets home' may have often been uttered it was rarely acted upon. It was normally only as the very last resort that father was called upon to deal with a child's misconduct. For most offences it was mother who was responsible for bringing down retribution on the head of an errant child.

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[97] Interview With Elizabeth W (b.1925) p5
[98] Interview with Rita (b.1928) p6
[99] Three contributors said that they were not naughty as children and so did not need to be disciplined by their parents.

So what sort of offences would provoke parental wrath? The most serious crimes that any child could commit at home were 'answering back', 'lying' and that all-embracing offence of 'being cheeky:

> Telling lies that one thing you must not do is tell a lie and we weren't allowed to swear and if you say you put your book down and you had a sweet or anything and I come along and shut your book and took your sweet that was a sin because you were taking things that didn't belong to you or interfering with things that didn't belong to you, you had to ask permission first.[100]

Other offences for which some children were punished included, as mentioned above, staying out beyond the time set by their parents, reading at the dinner table, squabbling with siblings, getting into trouble at school, associating with other children whom their parents deemed to be unsuitable and possibly the greatest crime that any child could commit outside the home upsetting the neighbours.

What sorts of punishments were inflicted on errant children? Was it, as the popular image would have us believe, a case of spare the rod and spoil the child or were working-class parents already using alternative disciplinary techniques? Out of the 29 people who talked about the methods of punishment used by their parents 15 said that their parents used physical punishments, while a further 4 said that their parents threatened them with physical punishment but did not carry it out, The remaining 10 said that their parents used other punishments.[101] These were generally a loss of privileges or pocket money, being sent to bed early, or being kept in, while some parents were more inventive. Emily's father, for example, had his own special punishment for naughty children:

> Mum used to keep us in check if we got too much we all got a good hiding But that one oh yeah and my dad used to mend our shoes at the weekend and the one that misbehaved the most had to sit and pick the nails up that he dropped.[102]

There seems to have been a marked gender difference in the ways that children were punished for while 41% of the female contributors said that they had been hit as children, 70% of males reported that they had been physically chastised, although a further 18% of the females reported that they had been threatened with physical punishment.

Generally then it would seem that physical punishment or, at least the threat of physical punishment, was the most prevalent way of disciplining working-class

[100] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p14
[101] Two of the female contributors talked about the way that their brothers were punished.
[102] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p3

children of both sexes at this time. Of course this could be taken to excess. I found one example of a child suffering serious abuse resulting in broken bones, while another of the contributors was regularly beaten when his father was drunk. But on the whole children were not seriously assaulted and many parents were seeking alternatives to physical punishments especially when dealing with their daughters. This seems to have been a continuation of a trend away from the use of physical punishment of children that started towards the end of the Victorian period.[103]

1.6 Keeping Up Appearances

One of the keys to upholding a family's social standing within the community, and probably one of the most important measures of a woman's abilities as a household manager and mother, was the appearance of her children. Most mothers strove to turn out well dressed and presented children, at least on Sundays. As we have seen above, bath day was often set for Saturdays, after which girls might have their hair put into curling papers to gain the 'Shirley Temple' look, while both boys and girls were often confined to their homes after bathing, so that they would not get dirty and would remain clean and smart for the Sunday rituals of going to Church or Sunday School and visiting or being visited by grandparents or other relations.

Going to Sunday school was one ritual that seems to have crossed all of the class boundaries. Only one of the contributors did not go and this was because she was Jewish, all of the other people questioned reported that they were either sent or went voluntarily each week. Even children from Catholic homes found themselves bundled off to a local Sunday mission.[104] For this was another one of the signs of working class respectability. Along with children being well behaved, it was expected that they be brought up as good Christians.[105] This would seem to have been especially true of children from Catholic families who were more likely to go to church schools and to have church going parents. Whether they wanted to go or not, Sunday school could have fringe benefits for both the parents the children. For while

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[103] See Elizabeth Roberts in John Benson(Ed), *The working Class in England 1875-1914* (London 1985) pp 5-7. For a full discussion of the use and attitudes towards corporal punishment see Ian Gibson, *The English Vice: Beating, Sex and Shame in Victorian England and After* (London 1978) Also Lloyd de Mause (Ed), *The History of Childhood: The Evolution of Parent-child Relationships as a Factor in History* (New York 1974) pp 414-420

[104]The three contributors who claimed to be Catholics reported that they went to Sunday school, even though the Catholic Church, while expecting children to attend Sunday Mass, did not run their own Sunday schools.

[105] Not only that of course but in often cramped and overcrowded homes it also gave the parents a couple of hours of free time without the children.

the parents got a couple of hours to themselves every week the children were encouraged to go with things like slide shows, picnics, trips to the seaside and a Christmas party for regular attenders,[106]

Where did children's clothes come from? This question is related, like so many others in this chapter, to the number of children and the position of an individual child within the family, as well as the position of the family within the working class. Let us begin by looking at the children who came from small respectable families. Generally their clothes seem to have come from two sources, either bought new from a local shop, or for younger children, hand-me-downs from older brothers and sisters or, as in Sam's case, cousins:

> My father's mother lived in the country and his sisters were up market to them we were the poor relations...I used to have my cousin at Dorking. I used to have his left offs. We'd go down to my grandmothers, as I say for a month, for a month in the summer, and they would go down there for a week my cousin my two cousins there was Sissy and John he was a year older than me and when we went down for this months holiday at my grandmothers they'd bring all his old clothes and I'd have them his trousers his short trousers his plimsolls and thing like that and I'd have them.[107]

It seems to have been almost universal that day to day wear for working-class children were either hand-me-downs or things that had been bought second-hand. For children from the larger families, or for those from the slightly less well off, there were in addition to hand-me-downs, the option of buying children's clothes from second- hand shops, jumble sales or market stalls which offered both new and second-hand clothing at a lower prices than the shops and it was these, especially in the poorer districts, that were the main sources of children's day to day clothing. When asked where their clothing came from most contributors replied like Dorothy:

> My mum used to go and buy second hand clothes and wash them and she was good at needle work and she'd alter them about for us and all that she didn't tell us where she go them from I can remember her doing that going down the old girls stalls seeing what she could pick up for us.[108]

Although second-hand clothes were the norm for everyday wear, most children appear to have been bought new clothing at least once a year, either at Christmas or Easter, no matter where their clothes came from the rest of the year

> My mum used to go to the second hand shops like you know the second hand shops or if she could see a jumble sale about used to get a lot of things there but Christmas times Easter times we always had new outfits they used to be in a club 6d a week they used to pay in this club

[106] See Chapter 4
[107] Interview with Sam (b.1916) p5
[108] Interview with Dorothy (b.1927) p6

like a Christmas club and they used to draw it out and buy us clothes only Easter and Christmas the rest of the year we used to have second hand, hand me downs.[109]

Savings or Christmas loan clubs were a popular way for working-class families to save towards buying Christmas presents or new clothing for the children. They operated on a system of trust; many were based in local churches and pubs. Each week the participants would contribute a small fixed amount, normally about 6d or 1/- over the period of a year. During the year each participant was required to take a loan from the club normally something like 10/- or a £1 depending on their contributions, which they would then repay each week with interest. At the end of the year the savings would be returned to the members plus a share of the interest.[110] Another option for saving up to buy expensive items like children's shoes were 'the boot clubs'. These had originated in the slum schools before the First World War but were still popular in poorer districts during the early years of the inter-war period. The school would arrange with a local shop to supply children's boots and shoes at a discount price in return for a guaranteed custom, the children would bring in their money each week and the teacher would record their contributions in a ledger. Once the child had reached the required amount or in some cases if the teacher and care committee felt that they needed new footwear, the child would be taken to the nominated shop.[111] As Emily recalled, some shop ran their own savings clubs:

> The only thing we was taken to the shop for was to try shoes on. See they used to run these shoe clubs where you paid for them, and when it was you your turn you went and spent the money on the shoes for the family.[112]

Another option was for mothers to buy their children's clothes on 'tick' from the 'tallyman'. These travelling salesmen would go from door to door in poorer working class districts offering for sale a range of household goods, like saucepans, kettles and household linens, as well as adult and children's clothing and footwear, all available on easy terms of a few pennies or shillings a week: although, as Fred M recalled, both the quality of the goods supplied, and the issue of whether or not he got paid might be in some doubt:

> Regular as clockwork every holiday time us kids always had something new all on the knocker ... whether he got paid or not I don't know.[113]

[109] Interview With Irene (b.1928) p15
[110] See interviews with Irene & Sam
[111] London Metropolitan Archive (LMA) EO/WEL/5/5 Wilmott St School Boot Club
[112] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p6
[113] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p 6

Buying from the tallyman was an expensive way of shopping, most charged high prices and offered credit at an exorbitant rate of interest. The goods that they sold were often of poor quality, so once a family started buying from such dealers it was almost impossible to stop, for by the time they had finished paying for something it, would need replacing, and so the cycle would be repeated.

For the very poorest families there were charitable organisations like the Salvation or Church Armies. These supplied children's clothing either free of charge, or more often, as Alice W recalled, in the form of penny bundles:

> My mother used to go to the Church Army when we were kids and used to buy a penny bundle and there was often things in there.[114]

Some mothers especially those who had been trained in tailoring or dressmaking would make their children's clothes, while a few, who could afford it, still had their children's clothes made for them, although with the coming of mass production this practice seems to have been virtually extinct by the start of the inter-war period.

What did children wear? As part of this study each contributor was asked to describe what he or she would have been wearing when they were aged about ten years old. From this it would seem that girls wore either a plain dress, sometimes with a pinafore on top, or a gymslip and blouse, while all of the boys wore short trousers, a thick linen shirt and jerseys: these seem to have constituted the uniform of childhood.

The most prized item of clothing for boys was a 'snake head' belt. This consisted of a multi-coloured elasticised strip fastened with a metal clasp in the shape of a snake's head, while the most hated items of clothing for boys seem to have been either caps, or the ties that some mothers insisted that their boys wore:

> We had to wear confounded scratchy jerseys they were the cheapest you could buy they were made of a very rough wool and by god they made you itch. So the exercise was if you wore a shirt to try and keep the shirt sleeves longer than the sleeves in the jerseys so it didn't hit you round the wrist and coupled with the jersey they buttoned up the neck on top of that you had a tie made of same material which my mother always insisted that I wore, but I always had a mop of hair, which was never tidy and I used to wear a school cap.[115]

Most girls seem to have been content with their clothing although, for those from the poorest families, their appearance could sometimes lead to teasing by other children.

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[114] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) p6 see also interview with George (b.1920) p6
[115] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p7-8

Clothing was perhaps one of the most distinctive badges of a child's social position. The types, quality, and above all, condition of a child's clothing was one of the key indicators of their position within the working class.

The most expensive item of clothing that any child possessed was normally his or her footwear. It would seem that shoes were the only item of clothing that most mothers insisted were bought new. Only in the very poorest families does it seem that children wore second-hand shoes. When questioned about whether their footwear was new or second-hand most contributors replied that 'we always had new shoes' or that;' Mother always insisted that they were bought new' 'we never had second hand shoes' By the start of the inter-war period, in London at least, barefoot children were almost never seen especially at school, although from some autobiographical accounts it might be thought that some child would have been better off going to school barefoot rather than wearing the broken down wrecks of shoes that they were in fact forced to wear. Tom McCarthy and others recalled that they used to put cardboard into the bottom of their boots to fill the holes.[116] He also recalled another time when he was unable to go to school for about six weeks during the winter because he had no serviceable boots:

> I Remember being absent from school for about six weeks one time because I hadn't any boots or shoes to wear and it was winter, cold and wet. One Day a lad from school, I remember he was called Wordsworth, was sent round from the school with a pair of hand-me –down boots given by a family of one of the kids in the class in response to a request for a pair for me from the class teacher.[117]

What did London's children wear on their feet? In the summer most children wore black rubber plimsolls or as they were known in the East End 'Rubbers'. These were cheap (6d a pair from Woolworths) and popular with children because they were light, comfortable to wear and easy to run in.[118] In the winter on the other hand, footwear could become one of the clearest indicators of social position especially for boys, while girls either wore plain lace-up shoes or shoes with bar fittings depending on their or their mothers taste. Boys' footwear seems to have depended on their position in the working class. Those from better off upper working-class and skilled

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[116] Tom McCarthy, *Boysie* pp 40-41

[117] Ibid p41

[118] Interview with Dusty (b.1928) p6. It might well be that it was the introduction of the plimsoll that led to the ending of the barefooted street urchin rather than all of the work of social reformers, for these shoes were both cheap and comfortable to wear.

families wore shoes those from poorer and rougher backgrounds wore heavy boots often shod with steel reinforcing on the heels.

> I always had to wear boots they would never buy me shoes When I was I don't know why But I was never allowed to wear shoes they always bought me boots and dad used to tip them all the Blakies on them and everything else like that you know so half horse shoe heels and studs and toe cap toe bit.[119]

It was not only boys from poor backgrounds that were forced to wear boots. Some parents, like those of Peter C, believed that boots were good for boys as the 'strengthened their ankles', but some better off boys saw the wearing of boots as a mark of shame and embarrassment particularly if, like Peter C, they went to schools with predominantly better off children where boots marked them out as different:

> I wanted to wear shoes because all the other well I say all the others all the People I thing I aspired to have shoes the more well off people had shoes and I'd like to have had shoes but they thought well I had to wear boots they were always good boots they weren't nothing but I always had to wear boots.[120].

Some boys, like Harry B, even went so far as to save up and buy their own shoes.

If footwear could mark a child out as coming from a particular section of the working class so could hairstyle. For girls in the twenties it was popular to have hair either very long and braided or more often cut into the fashionable 'flapper' style bob, while in the thirties it was popular for girls to have either the curly 'Shirley Temple' style or long hair either flowing loose or tied up in pigtails. It would seem from the oral history evidence that most girls had their hair cut professionally. Only in the poorest households was home haircutting resorted to, often with the result that girls from the poorest background sported the dreaded pudding basin hairstyle. Most girls in poorer districts seem to have had short hair. This may well have been due to the intervention of the Schools Medical Service in the shape of the school nurse (see chapter 3). For boys on the other hand, the almost universal haircut was 'the short back and sides' in which the hair at the back and sides of the head was cut short, leaving longer hair on top that could then be combed into a parting. Boys from the poorest families and districts, were marked out by having what was commonly called the 4d or 6d 'all off', this meant that all of the hair on the head would be clippered off leaving just a small fringe of hair at the front, although this was optional. Boys like George and Tom McCarthy from poorer families and those in institutional care particularly favoured this style. Firstly because it reduced to need to have the hair cut

[119] Interview with Peter C (b.1922) p10
[120] ibid p11

regularly, and secondly because it reduced the chances of getting head lice and nits. Many parents struggled to send their children out well dressed and well shod. This effort could lead to problems when things went wrong, as Elizabeth W recalled:

> We'd have a pair of shoes my father taught himself how to do snobbing as they called it he'd mend them and that day we had no shoes might get a pair of sandals or what ever but other than that you just didn't have any that's the only time I can remember staying away from school and the teacher did not believe me because although we was poor we was clean and I always had this pair of shoes on but cos my dad was ill that day and couldn't mend them I didn't go to school and that's when this teacher she whacked me as they did in those days.[121]

Generally parents, and mothers in particular, wanted their children and especially their daughters, to look well dressed as this was yet another factor in demonstrating a family's social status and a mother's skill as a housekeeper. If her children looked clean, tidy and well dressed then that reflected well on both mother and their family as a whole, thus helping to enhance their standing within the local community. If, on the other hand, the children appeared dirty or poorly clothed, this was a mark of shame, both on the family, and on mother in particular.

1.7 Conclusion

On the whole then it would seem that the home lives of children in the inter-war period differed little from that of their parent's generation who had been brought up in the late Victorian and Edwardian Era. Most still lived in overcrowded, often squalid conditions, although, thanks to the slum clearance and the house building programmes of the local authorities, these were gradually improved during this period. Most working- class homes were still lit by gas, and were still without a bathroom or indoor toilet.

Thanks to the increases in pay that had been forced on employers by the labour shortages of the war years, living standards, on the whole, had improved by the start of the inter-war period and were to continue to do so in London despite repeated financial crises, and the effects of the depression. This, in the main, was due to the development of new consumer led industries and the demand for staff to work in the new headquarters buildings of the multinational corporations that chose to make the capital their home in the years between the wars. For while the rest of Britain, especially the former industrial areas of the North, were gripped by depression as the old industrial base of mining, heavy engineering and shipbuilding went into a terminal

[121] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) P12

decline, London was still the capital of a great and growing Empire which supported the new consumer led industrial developments of what has come to be called the second industrial revolution which grew rapidly around the fringes of the capital. Thus except in the largest and poorest working-class households standards of nutrition also improved at this time with the consequent decline in diseases of poverty (see chapter 3). When it came to behaviour, children while no longer being expected to be seen and not heard, were still expected to live within a fairly rigid set of social norms which were, as will be shown in the next chapter, imposed both at home and at school and deviation from which could and often did result in swift and painful retribution.

Chapter Two
The School Child

By 1918 there had been compulsory schooling in Britain for almost fifty years. While the curriculum and the age of children attending the state funded schools may have changed over the years, for the majority of children the basic school structure was almost identical to that established in 1862 by the payment by results system. This had required each child to attain a fixed standard each year in reading, writing and arithmetic. On the achievement of this depended the level of the school's funding for the following year.

This chapter will show how the structure of education developed during the inter-war years. It will look at the effects of the economic stringencies that were imposed by the Board of Education epitomised by the effects of the 'Geddes' Axe' that fell across all areas of government spending in the wake of the 1921 financial crisis.[1] These money saving measures were to influence a generation of school children because, among other things, they led to a reduction in the number of teacher-training places and an increase in class sizes. The chapter will go on to look at the effectiveness, particularly in London, of the reforms proposed by the Hadow Report (1926) into the future of elementary education. As will be shown the report laid the foundations for the state-funded education system we have today.

The chapter will not look in any great depth at the politics of education during this period, but rather at the effects that political policy had on those for whom state education was intended i.e. the working-class child.[2] Neither is it intended to be an in-depth study of the history of education during this period as there are already many such works. Rather it is an examination of some of the key issues and events which took place during the period and an attempt to discover how these reflected the attitudes of those in authority towards the working class in general and the working-class child in particular.

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[1] The financial crises of 1921 led, in 1922, to the establishment of a *Committee on National Expenditure* under the chairmanship of the businessman Sir Eric Geddes who had previously served as chairman of the 1917 *Committee for Reconstruction.* The Committee was charged with the task of finding ways to reduce public expenditure. Its report led to the introduction of swinging cuts across the public sector most notably in the areas of education and social services, although almost all aspects of government spending were affected. These cuts became known as the 'Geddes Axe.

[2] For a detailed survey of the politics of education reform during the inter-war period see Brian Simon, *The politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940* (London 1974)

As part of this approach, it will examine the provision of post -11+ schools within the LCC area to determine what, if any, influence the social class of an area had on school provision within it. To do this the location of each county, secondary (grammar), and central school has been plotted onto the 'social condition maps' produced for the 'New Survey of London'. [3]

The chapter will go on to look at the effect that changes in local education policy had on London's school population. The role of the teachers and attendance officers, who were responsible for the day-to-day provision of education, will then be examined, to discover what, if any, effect shifts in education policy had on day to day life in the classroom.

The influence of Sir Cyril Burt, a member of eugenics society, who was recognised at the time as a leader in the fields of child psychology and child guidance, as well as being a leading figure in the growth of the educational testing movement will then be examined.

The chapter will then look at the methods used to provide education for the majority of children. It will look briefly at the curriculum provided in the different sorts of state funded school, and at the debate the surrounding the merits of a variety of new teaching methods and styles.

Finally the attitudes of parents, teachers and especially children towards the use of corporal punishment will be discussed showing how, despite suggestions that the use of the cane was decreasing, in many districts of London, physical punishment (albeit much of it unofficial) was still very prevalent.

2.1 The Fall of the Geddes Axe and School Structure before Hadow

In 1918 the education system in London, as in the rest of Britain, was based on the provisions of the Education Act 1902, the codes of education issued in 1904 and the revised funding rules of 1907. This provided for a two-tier school system with elementary schools for the majority of children up to (in London) the age of 14; [4] and secondary (grammar) schools for those who could either afford to pay the fees or were fortunate enough to gain one of the free places established under the 1902 Act. Most

[3] *New Survey of London Life and Labour* IV & VIII

[4] The school leaving age is discussed in more detail in chapter five but basically before 1921 outside London most children were allowed to leave school at 12 or 13.

secondary school pupils remained at school until the age 15 or 16 with very few staying on to 17 or 18 before going on to university. The 1907 rules required that, in order to receive state funding secondary (grammar) schools had to provide 25% of their places free to children from the elementary schools. Nationally some 127 schools were however, allowed to allocate fewer places; 6 provided 20%, 13 only 15%, 33 only 12 ½% and 75 only 10% of free places[5] The reasons for this are unclear but seem to relate to the size, location and character of the schools concerned.

For working-class children formal education began in the elementary school at the legal minimum age of 5; but it had become common practice in the poorest districts for children to start school as young as 3. As Phyllis Willmott recorded in her autobiography: 'One day after my third birthday I was taken to join my brother at the LCC kindergarten school on the 'other side' of the park.'[6] In 1922, however, the Geddes committee, as part of its cost cutting measures, insisted that no child start school before the legal minimum age. One of the committee's most controversial proposals was to raise the school starting age to 6. This would have led to a major saving, as there would have been a reduction in the number of teachers required; but it was felt to be an undesirable reduction in the time that children stayed at school. So strong was the opposition to this measure that, it was, despite pressure from the Treasury, the one economy that the Board of Education (BOE) was able to resist. Local Education Authorities (LEAs) were advised that, except in the most exceptional circumstances, children were not to be admitted to school below the age of 5. As will be shown below this was one instruction from the BOE that the LCC seems to have chosen to ignore.

Another effect of the Geddes Axe was the increase in elementary school class sizes. Until 1922 there had been a steady decrease in the size of classes from one hundred or more pupils, as had been common in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to classes of forty. Geddes proposed to increase this to between fifty and sixty and also to make the head teacher of any school with fewer than two hundred and fifty pupils teach a class on a regular basis. The effects of these cuts and the commensurate reduction in the number of teacher training places were to be felt throughout the period.

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[5] Brian Simon, *The Politics of Education Reform* p.25

[6] Phyllis Willmott, *Growing up in a London Village* (London 1979) p 113

So how were London's schools organised between the wars? As can still be seen today from their architecture, at the start of the period the elementary schools were designed to operate on a tripartite system of mixed infants up to the age of 7, then separate senior girls and boys departments each having separate entrances, playgrounds, and teaching staffs. This tripartite system had remained unchanged almost since the establishment of the London School Board in 1870. There were, however, two distinct types of elementary school the provided or 'council school' and the non-provided 'church school' many of which predated the 1870 Education Act.[7]

In theory, both were supposed to provide the same type and standard of education, except that in the church or non-provided school a particular faith took precedence. In practice there was a marked difference both in the standards of accommodation and education provided by the two types of school. Most of the schools on the education committees 'black list' were non-provided; many were housed in old dilapidated buildings, with poor lighting, heating and toilet facilities.[8] It was supposedly the responsibility of the school governors to provide the school buildings and equipment, but many non-provided schools simply did not have the money to carry out the improvements necessary to bring their buildings up to the required standard: But it was not just the buildings that were below par the standard of teaching at such schools was often below that required by the Board, with old-fashioned methods and a lack of breadth to the curriculum

Why then, if schools in the non-provided sector were so bad, were they so popular with parents? Surely parents, who it must be assumed wanted the best for their children, would not send them to bad schools?

One answer to this question might be that they did not have a choice, because there were not enough council school places. This notion can soon be dispelled for, although the non-provided sector made up some 40% of London's elementary schools, they did not provide 40% of the elementary school places, and nowhere across the capital were non–provided schools the only option for parents to choose. In fact the LCC

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[7] Passed in 1870 The (Forster) Education Act required all local authorities to establish school boards and where necessary establish schools. The 1876 Act laid a duty on parents to ensure that their children received some form of elementary education and the 1880 Act made it compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 10 to undergo some form of elementary education.

[8] The Black list was a register of school which the Education Department thought to be sub-standard for one reason or other the most common being poor the physical conditions or location of a school.

records show that by the 1930s some council schools had classrooms standing empty because of a lack of pupils. A second and perhaps more plausible, reason might be that parents saw non-provided, religious schools as offering the best learning environment for their children, not perhaps because of their academic record but rather because of the moral and religious training they provided. This religious divide was particularly marked in the East End where Jewish children attended separate provided and non-provided Jewish elementary and secondary schools. Catholic parents across the capital were encouraged by their parish priests to send their children to church schools rather than what they perceived to be the Protestant dominated council schools.

These, on the face of it, seem to be quite reasonable explanations for the continuation of what, quite often, were poorly maintained and poorly staffed non-provided schools; but there is another reason why such schools continued to thrive. Apart from the religious qualification, such schools made almost no distinction about the educational attainment of the children they would accept. Thus, children, who within the maintained sector would be classified as un-teachable or educationally subnormal and transferred to a special school, would be accepted at a non- provided school. Hence a child like Marion, who would later be diagnosed as dyslexic, was able to remain at her Catholic elementary school where, although, as she recalled, she did little academic work, she was able to play an active part in the life of the school:

> When we was at school I used to sell the sweets at school, the Catholic school, that was my job, and handing out the bottles of milk. We got free milk in them days with a straw, and I used to stand out in the playground with a box round me neck, selling the kids sweets... I never learnt anything did I? .I could only watch. I had no education what so ever ...Oh there was always something for me to do threadling beads and that sort of thing. Making something out of the beads, making rugs, woollen rug, crocheting scarves. I was sitting at the back in the back row of the seat crocheting or sewing.[9]

Some non-provided schools, although they were not classified as special schools, seem to have specialised in taking children with learning difficulties, provided that the parents could afford to pay the fees. The records of the Maudsley Hospital Child Guidance Clinic, to which children from South London were sent for assessment of their educational ability, include several cases of children who were withdrawn from the provided sector because they were judged to be 'backward'. The LEA sent all such children to 'special schools' where they might work at their own pace. Unfortunately

[9] Interview with Marion (b.1923) pp 8-9

there was a stigma attached to children who attended such schools, so those parents who could afford it sent their children to fee paying, non-provided school instead. [10]In some cases the parents soon ran out of money, and had to apply to the LEA for their children to be readmitted to the maintained sector.[11]

In order to provide some form of post-elementary education for a few of the brightest working-class children the LCC had also established two other types of school, the Central and Technical schools. These had originally been planned as higher elementary schools, which were to have been provided with better facilities and more highly qualified teachers than an ordinary elementary: but following a court hearing in 1911, which ruled that the council had no powers under the Education Acts to establish such schools, they were reclassified as ordinary elementary schools doing advanced work. Hence, they were required to operate within the restrictions of elementary school codes. Even so, they remained selective and their curricula were designed to provide vocationally related education for some of the capital's brightest working-class children.

The central schools, which were created in 1911, took children both boys and girls from the age of 11 to 15 or 16. By 1920 there were 51 of these schools with about 17,000 pupils, which, while providing a general education specialised, particularly in the latter years, in teaching either technical or commercial subjects like bookkeeping, accountancy and shorthand. Some schools offered typing as an additional subject after school.[12] The technical schools, of which there were only 20, with 2,889 pupils, took both boys and girls between the ages of 13 to 15. The curriculum in the boys' schools placed a heavy emphasis on mathematical and scientific subjects, complemented by woodwork, metalwork and technical drawing. Some like the Beaufoy Technical Institute offered basic engineering as well. Girls' schools by contrast taught craft skills like needlework, decorative and applied arts, and domestic economy.[13] As will be discussed below, while being designated as elementary schools, all such schools in London, unlike other parts of the country, were selective, taking on mainly lower-middle and upper

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[10] The Hospital Files are closed to the general public and the author had to sign an undertaking not to use any specific examples.

[11] LMA LCC/PH/MENT/2/3-7 Maudsley hospital Sample of children's case cards 1908-52.

[12] Brian Simon, *The Politics of Education Reform 1920-1940* p 22

[13] London County Council Statistics .26 1920-21 (London 1923)

working-class children. For the majority of the capital's school aged children even the central and technical schools were beyond reach.

The official classification of central and technical schools as elementary doing advanced work rather than as secondary schools led, at times, to confusion about their status and role. The parents of children attending such schools were generally required to sign an undertaking that their child would remain at the school until the completion of their course. This normally meant that the child stayed on at school until they were 15 or in some cases 16, and it was this extra year or two that could cause the problem. Take for example the case of Dorothy Bond a pupil at Downham Central School for Girls, on whose behalf the Headmistress wrote to the Board of Education in 1934. The girl, whose father was a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy, had been forced to leave after completing only three years of a four-year course at the age 14, to go to work. This was because the Admiralty had stopped their grant arguing that, as she attended an elementary school she would normally be expected to leave at 14. Subsequent enquiry by the Board of Education revealed that both the War Office and the Post office recognised central schools as secondary for the purposes of recruitment, as did the Ministry of Pensions when calculating the payment of dependants' allowances under the pensions and unemployment legislation. The Admiralty finally responded that it only paid grants in respect of sailors' children up to the age of 14, and that any further funding should come from the LEA, at which point the correspondence stopped.[14]

It was found, from the oral testimony, that those attending the central schools thought of themselves as having achieved something special, speaking of their schools with pride:

> I passed the scholarship and went to Kilburn Lane. I must have been about eleven I suppose and we had to well me parents had to sign a form saying I would be there for four years, so I left when I was about 15 ½ something like that.[15]

Only in those working-class families, like Angela Rodaway's, where one child gained a free place at grammar school, while others did not, were they acutely aware of the social distinction between the two types of institution and of the inferior status of the central school and all who attended them.[16]

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[14] Public Records Office (PRO) ED11/367 Attendance committee LCC 1934-35

[15] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) p10 (note Kilburn Lane was a Central not a Grammar School)

[16] Angela Rodaway, *A London Childhood* (London 1960) pp66-71

For the middle-class child, provided that their parents could afford it and were prepared to pay the fees, [17] a secondary (grammar) school education was the norm.[18] For the working-class child however, the first hurdle that had to be crossed was the scholarship examination. The LCC like all LEAs awarded a number of county scholarships each year by competitive examination. The system was such that the pass mark could be changed, so that the number of passes equalled the number of places available. Thus, for some children, it was a question of the availability of a school place, rather than educational ability, that determined whether they ended up at a secondary, central or elementary school. Children from some of the poorest districts did not even have the chance to take the test, as many schools in these districts did not bother to put up any candidates. While in those schools that did enter candidates, special scholarship classes would be run, often by the headmaster, to coach the children in the subjects required for the examination. Even if they passed the exam, this did not necessarily mean a place at a secondary school. First they had to find a school that had a vacancy and was willing to take them. Most schools operated a quota system, and once they had taken their quota of scholarship pupils the doors were firmly closed:

> One of my brothers he went to the secondary school and my sister she should have gone to the secondary school but they didn't have enough. They had a quota. She missed out she ended up school cook.[19]

Secondly, the parents of children attending both central and secondary (grammar) schools had to be willing and able to support the child, and to do without their earnings for one or two years after the normal leaving age of 14, as most secondary schools expected their pupils to remain at the school until they were at least 16. This was the greatest barrier to some children going to secondary (grammar) schools, as parents were reluctant to allow them to go either because they could not, or would not, afford it, or because of some misguided idea that the child would be educated beyond his or her class. The third problem was that parents had to find the money for uniforms, books and equipment because most scholarships only covered the school fees. Only the brightest children and those from the poorest backgrounds got maintenance grants, but even these did not cover everything. In some cases, like that of Elizabeth W's sister, other relatives

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[17] According to BOE statistics in 1930 school fees were on average £12 per year, although fees could be much higher.

[18] PRO ED11/200 Education Statistics

[19] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p9

might help out with the costs, but generally the costs of sending a child to a secondary school fell on the often already hard-pressed parents:

> My sister was the brainy one and she was lady muck sort of thing she went to the Green Coats school in Commercial road my uncle paid for her but to get her uniform and that cos my mum couldn't and he encouraged her cos my uncle was clever as well.[20]

With all of these social and financial hurdles it is little wonder that many bright working-class children found themselves unable to take up their scholarships. There is also evidence that suggests that some children deliberately set out to fail the scholarship examination, either because they knew that their parents could not afford to send them, or, because like Elizabeth W, they wanted to remain with their friends:

> I was very, very shy and if you won exams then you was sent to another school, and I didn't want to go to another school, so I deliberately flunked it. I mean this teacher who used to dig me said you could have passed that but you didn't. I was too shy I didn't want to go to another school.[21]

No matter how bright a working-class child might be, their chances of gaining anything more than an elementary education were slim to say the least. In 1924 the LCC provided free secondary (grammar) places for only about 1% of London's school children, as compared to the Board of Education target of 2%, and fewer than 9% of all London school-aged children received anything other than the basic elementary education.[22] This situation was soon set to change with the coming of a review into the state of English elementary education.

2.2 A Modern System for a Modern Age The Hadow Report

The Report of the Consultative Committee on the Education of the Adolescent (The Hadow Report) was published in 1926. It eventually went well beyond its original terms of reference which were:

1. To consider and report upon the organisation, objective and curriculum of courses of study suitable for children who will remain in full-time attendance at schools, other than secondary schools up to the age of 14 regard being had on the one hand to the requirements of a good general education and the desirability of providing a reasonable variety of curriculum so far as is practicable, for children of varying tastes and abilities,

[20] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p 3

[21] Ibid p9

[22] Brian Simon, *The Politics of Education Reform* pp120-22

and on the other to the probable occupations of the pupils in commerce industry and agriculture

2. Incidentally thereto to advise as to the arrangements which should be mad
    (a) For testing the attainments of the pupils at the end of their course;
    (b) For facilitating in suitable cases the transfer of individual pupils to secondary schools at the age above the normal age of admission.

According to Brian Simon, these terms had been agreed between the committee chairman Sir Henry Hadow and the permanent secretary to the Board of Education, L.H Selby-Bigge, to limit the scope of the enquiry and prevent a discussion of the whole structure of British education.[23] It was intended that the committee would look at the curriculum available in the elementary schools to see what improvements could be made, especially in the senior departments. However, thanks in no small part to the activities of the reformist members of the committee led by R.H Tawney it ended up as a wholesale review of the state-funded education system. Although they were careful not to exceed their terms of reference the committee members were able, through a discussion of the needs to expand the curriculum and administration of education for children over the age of eleven, to examine the whole structure of the English and Welsh education system and to produce a series of recommendations that would turn the school system on its head. [24] Whilst accepting that some children should receive an academically based secondary education of the type then offered by the secondary schools, the committee felt that all children should receive some form of secondary education, preferably in a separate post 11+ school. The committee recommended that alternative courses of general education, possibly with an industrial or commercial bias, should also be provided, and that all post 11+ schools should be classed as secondary.[25]

This apparently minor administrative recommendation was in fact the most important of their recommendations, for it meant a complete restructuring of educational provision for this age group. The secondary code provided for a higher staffing ratio, and therefore smaller class sizes. It had, since Geddes, been Government policy to encourage classes of between 50 and 60 pupils in elementary schools. The secondary code provided for classes of between twenty and thirty, while at the same time allowing

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[23] Ibid p 75

[24] It should be remembered that elementary education at this time continued until the age of 14 and that most children attended the same elementary school throughout their school days.

[25] See *The Report of the Consultative Committee on The Education Of The Adolescent* (1926) Chapter 9

more space per pupil: the elementary code allowed 10 sq. feet per child and the secondary recommended a minimum of 12. The secondary code also provided for more money to be spent on books and equipment, while from the teachers' point of view it meant higher pay and longer holidays. At half term, for example, the secondary schools were closed for a whole week, while the elementary were closed for just two days.[26] The problem of the difference in holiday entitlement between secondary and elementary school teachers was not simply a matter of the their ability to take their ease. It also affected their in-service training. During the summer vacation a variety of additional training courses were arranged. These were often organised to coincide with, and to run over, the whole length of the secondary school teachers' six -week holiday. This meant that teachers in elementary, and more particularly in central schools, who had only four weeks summer vacation, could not take part in such courses because, of course, they had to be back in the classroom before their training was completed.[27]

The committee put forward a range of options based upon the practices of the time. Although they had no mandate to look at the secondary school system, as it then existed, they recommended the renaming of the secondary schools as secondary grammar schools. Although they made no direct comment on the issue of fees, they did note that, nationally in most such schools, the majority of fee payers, who generally made up between 65 and 75% of the pupils, left at about the age of 14, while the grant-aided pupils remained to 15 and often 16, and that the majority of prefects and leaders within these schools were scholarship pupils. The committee recommended that the central schools become known as secondary modern schools and be, either selective, as were the London central schools, or non-selective, like those of City of Leicester, and that these schools should continue to provide either an industrially or commercially biased course in the latter years. The committee further recommended that there should be provision for interchange between central and grammar school at the age of 13. For the remainder of children who did not want, or require, such courses there should still be separate senior departments or 'higher tops', preferably in a separate building. But the key feature of all the committee's recommendations was that all post 11+ schools of

[26] This difference in teachers' holiday entitlements was to be unchanged until the implementation of the 1944 (Butler) Education Act.

[27] Institute of Education National (IoE) National Union of Women Teachers (NUWT) Archive box 91.13 Central schools

what ever type should be classed as secondary and that all children should have access to the same standard of accommodation, equipment, and teaching no matter what type of post 11+ school they attended.

The Hadow Committee Report was probably the most important event in English education during the inter-war years and was to lead to a major reorganisation of the whole structure of the English education system.[28] In the forefront of this reorganisation was the LCC. Many of the old 'three decker' elementary schools with their separate infants, boys and girls departments found themselves being turned either into infants and primary or senior schools, although many school buildings ended up in the anomalous position of accommodating senior and infants departments or junior and senior departments. The problem was that the reorganisation was a slow process and met with opposition on a number of fronts including, perhaps surprisingly, the Association of Head Teachers, who were concerned about the salaries and status of their members. In many areas women found themselves replaced by men as head teacher when their schools were merged as it was argued that a man should be in charge of older boys.

The LCC caused a major furore when they appointed a women head teacher to an infants and mixed seniors school. There were protests from the National Association of School Masters (NAS), a spokesman for which stated that it was 'physiologically dangerous to put a woman in charge of boys.' When asked if, in that case, it was physiologically dangerous for boys to have mothers he replied that it was 'dangerous in any household to have a woman in a position of authority!'[29] To try to head off the complaints of the head teachers displaced by reorganisation, the Board of Education allowed them to be paid at their old rate for up to three years, which, it was hoped, would be long enough to allow them to find new posts. But as the Association of Head Teachers pointed out, this did not give former head teachers their status back and many former heads found themselves in the embarrassing position of working as ordinary classroom teachers in their old schools.

2.3 The Changing Face of Schooling: The Effects of Hadow

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[28] Hadow had only looked at education in England it had no mandate to consider education in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland all of which had their own education systems.

[29] IoE NUWT box 70. file 3 Hadow Report (1929-30)

What effect did the Hadow Committee Report have? For many children it had remarkably few immediate results. The financial constraints of the time, in particular the moratorium on spending imposed on the LEAs by the government in 1931, meant that in many areas new schools were not built, despite the land having already been purchased. In others, where reorganisation had begun, the situation developed where children in different parts of the same LEA's area could find themselves attending different types of school, ranging from the new non-selective secondary modern to the old senior department in an unreformed elementary school. Many elementary schools still had classes of 50 or 60 even in senior departments, while in some rural areas classes of 100 were not unknown.

In London, as discussed above, the LCC had established two types of elementary schools doing advanced work to provide a form of secondary education for those children who were considered to be of above average intelligence, but not suitable either through class, or financial constraint, to attend a secondary school. By 1937 there were 106 such schools and departments (86 Central and 20 Technical schools) plus 27 county and 77 non-provided secondary or grammar schools within the LCC area;[30] but all of these schools were highly selective and still only provided places for about 35% of the capital's post 11+ school population. This might, at first glance, seem to have been a major improvement in post 11+ provision in the 13 years since 1924, but a more careful examination of the figures, (see Table 2.1), shows that the actual number of secondary school places had increased by only 6,400 (11.5%) to 55,433 while the number of central and technical school places had risen by 13,200 (34%)to 32,456. So how could such a moderate increase in provision mean that such a high proportion of London's post 11+-school population were being taken out of the elementary schools? The answer in simple: the total size of London's school population had been reduced by a third in the 17 years from 1920 as families with children moved out of the LCC area, often to the new cottage estates that were being built by the council around the outskirts of the capital. The population of school age children dropped from 839,092 in 1920 to just 543,611 in 1937, that is a drop of some 35%. Thus, it was not that there had been a vast improvement in the number of secondary and central school places but rather, that there

[30] County Grammar Schools were provided-schools established by the County Councils to operate under the secondary school code as opposed to most secondary school, which were part of the non-provided sector.

were far fewer children in London to fill them. Even so, for the majority of London's working-class children like Fred P, post 11+ education still meant the old senior departments of elementary schools:

> I went to Essendine School. It was an elementary school. It was a wonderful school, it was a big school there was a girls department there. There was, in the boys department there was over five hundred boys there. Fourteen teachers, two ladies and twelve men teachers, now they taught everything from basic English to a little light French, arithmetic for those who were good enough trigonometry, very good teachers.[31]

Table 2.1 Number of Places in Post 11+ Schools In the County of London

Year	Maintained	Non-Maintained	Central
1924	9342	39689	
1925	9585	39772	21523
1926	9868	42832	23099
1927	10520	42961	23846
1928	10769	43002	24389
1929	10706	43343	26668
1930	10987	43239	28524
1931	No figure available		
1932	11753	44680	30081
1933	11765	42307	30510
1934	11928	42455	30975
1935	12139	43842	31671
1936	12213	43306	31776
1937	12136	43297	32456

Table 2.1 Number of places in London's secondary and central schools 1924-37 taken from the annual statistics published by the LCC. (Note no figures are available for the year 1931. Also that the number of places in junior technical schools have not been included as these remained at about 2500 throughout the period.)

Table 2.2 Size School Population in the County of London

Year	Total No School Age Children	Number of Children Enrolled in LCC Schools		Percentage : of Population	
		3-5	5-14	3-5	5-14
1920	839092	41737	682314	29.3	98.0
1923	801131	63665	609316	37.8	98.4
1925	797149	60986	612556	38.0	98.2
1927	766860	51208	602386	36.3	98.4
1929	717917	47811	572448	38.6	98.5
1931	685004	48862	551193	43.3	98.7
1933	670678	45788	545133	42.5	98.8
1935	600262	44453	481270	44.8	98.9
1937	543611	42704	435408	47.4	98.9

[31] Interview with Fred P (b.1917) p8

Table 2.2 London's School Population 1920-37 taken from The LCC Annual Statistics

It is interesting to note that, throughout the period, the number of places in council- provided secondary schools was only about a quarter of the total; the majority of secondary education in the capital was still supplied by the old non-provided schools. Of the 27 provided secondary schools in the capital, most were girls' schools (15 girls', 11 boys' and 1 mixed). The council had a deliberate policy of opening secondary schools for girls intending to counteract what they perceived to be an imbalance in provision in the non- provided sector, where they believed that the majority of schools catered for boys. In fact the number of girls' schools exceeded the number of boys' schools in the non- provided sector as well (42 girls to 32 boys with 2 mixed) although, of course, this does not mean that the number of places for girls exceeded the number of places for boys. It must also be remembered that there is always a slightly higher proportion of girls to boys within the British population.

It can be seen from Table 2.2 that, except at the height of the depression (1931-33), and despite the 1922 circular from the BOE instructing LEAs to reduce the number of under 5's enrolled in the elementary schools, the percentage of 3-5 year olds in the capital's schools grew steadily during the inter-war period. Indeed in poorer districts it seems to have been common practice for children to start school at 3 or 4 years of age although this did not always run smoothly.

> I was four. Four and a half, my mum took me to school and it was the first, my first day, and I remember going and sitting in the classroom and I cried because I wanted me mum. I suppose I was only a kid, four and I cried and me mum heard. She heard me crying and the teacher had told me off for crying and me mum come back to the school. She come in the classroom, picked me up, and took me home and the headmistress come out and said 'no way you must bring her back' and she said 'no not my child she's not going to be told off or cry.' And she took me home and I didn't go back to school for another six months (laughs). And I was nearly five then when I went to school first time.[32]

By 1939 477 of the LCC's 532 elementary schools had been reorganised along Hadow lines with 30 more in the pipeline; only 93 out of the 352 non-provided schools had been reorganised. This did not, however, always mean the creation of separate post 11+ senior schools as envisaged by Hadow; rather in many cases a conglomeration of separate senior departments in buildings shared with either infant or junior departments. Thus, it was often the case that senior girls departments were combined with infants, while junior departments were combined with senior boys. Only a few separate senior

[32] Interview with Irene (b.1928)

elementary schools had been established. Although there were plans to build new senior schools, these were to be frustrated by war. Even in the central and secondary schools buildings were shared, with apparently separate boys and girls schools occupying the same space. Furthermore some so called central schools were actually nothing more than central departments within ordinary elementary schools, and may have been little more than a single class doing advanced work.

While the Hadow report led to a restructuring of the schools organisational systems, in some areas the inter-war period saw some remarkable changes in both the methods of teaching and the attitudes of teachers towards their pupils; in others the old attitudes and methods were to cling on until well after the Second World War. What led to these changes in the methodology and attitudes of some members of the teaching profession? Why, perhaps more importantly, did old teaching methods and ideas persist in others, and how did these changes in attitudes and teaching practices affect the lives of London's school children? It might be surprising to some people to learn that, particularly during the 1920s, progressive education, with all of its notions of independent, individual learning and free expression, were not just the preserve of a few quirky private schools, like the famous free learning experiments that were conducted at the exclusive Summerhill, but that some LEA's, including the LCC, conducted experiments with this type of teaching in both secondary and ordinary elementary schools.

One of the LCC's main interests was in the Dalton Plan. This was a system of individualised learning developed in Dalton, Massachusetts between 1908-1918 by Miss Helen Parkhurst, a disciple of Maria Montessori, in which children were supposed to use study periods to work in groups and learn off each other, with the teacher acting as a guide to their learning.[33] For most children, however, the school experience was hardly different from that of their parents. The classes may have been smaller, but the teaching methods, and the attitudes of the teachers, had hardly changed, despite changes in the training colleges. Most young teachers soon fell into line with the teaching and disciplinary methods that were favoured by their older colleagues and more particularly the school's head teacher. In many schools there seems to have developed 'a them and us attitude' between the school's staff and the officials and inspectors from the

[33] Lesley Fox Lee, 'The Dalton and the Loyal, Capable Intelligent Citizen', *History of Education* 2000 (29 no 2,) pp 129-138

education office and the Board of Education. Dr Philip Gardner of Cambridge University, who has been researching the experiences of young teachers between the wars, tells an apparently apocryphal story of how teachers dealt with surprise visits from the local inspector. When the teacher saw the inspector approaching they would call out a reliable pupil and give him or her a piece of chalk, or a ruler, and tell the child to take it to the teacher in the next class. When the chalk, or ruler with its implicit message, was delivered, the recipient would tell the bemused child to take it on to the next class and so on, so that by the time the inspector entered the front door the whole staff had been alerted and were working by the approved methods.

There was another trick that teachers soon learned when dealing with inspectors, before the inspector arrived they would warn the class and tell them all to put their hands up when he asked a question. If they were sure that they knew the answer they were to raise their right hands and, if not, to raise their left hands. Gardner reported that, even the worst class, where the teacher would normally be fighting a constant battle for control, conspired to defeat this outsider who was threatening their teacher.

To gain his picture of the inter-war classroom, Gardner conducted a series of oral history interviews with people who had joined the teaching profession in the inter-war period.[34] As a result, he paints a somewhat rosy picture of life in the classroom at this time. On the other hand Stephen Humphries uses oral testimony in his book *Hooligans or Rebels?* (admittedly mainly from a slightly earlier period) to paint a picture of constant turmoil and battle in the classroom.[35]

So what was life like in the classrooms of the inter-war period? From my own work it would seem that, as might be expected, life in the classroom depended to a large extent on the location and type of school that the contributor experienced. These could range from the rough and often violent unreformed elementary schools of the East End and North Kensington to the genteel respectability of the Central and County Grammar schools that set out to imitate the public school system. Thus Fred M who attended a 'rough' unreformed elementary school in Bethnal Green described his head teacher as

> The headmaster was no f***ing good either. He had his favourites, you know what I mean. My mate, his father had a shop. Every time we got sent to have the cane he used to say to my mate,'

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[34] Philip Gardner,' The Giant at the Front: Young Teachers and Corporal Punishment in Inter-war Elementary Schools', *History of Education* 25/2 (1996) pp141-163

[35] Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939* (London 1981)

you wait outside' I'd get the stick like. He'd whack you with the stick, he'd say 'go and get the stick from the what you call it' He used to whack you with the stick... we'd talk afterwards and I'd say to my mate 'did you get the stick?' 'Oh no. He won't hit me' cos he used to take him in sweets [36]

Fred P, on the other hand, who attended another unreformed elementary school in North Kensington described his teachers thus:

> ...Very good teachers hard teachers but if you showed a willingness of trying they would help you all they could. If you was a slacker they were on your heels all day long....[37]

So it would seem that not all unreformed schools were unpleasant places. Marion, who attended a non-provided Catholic school, had nothing but happy memories of her teachers, describing one of them as her guardian angel. Although most teachers seem to have adopted a professional remoteness towards their young charges, some of the best remembered behaved in unusual or eccentric ways:

> I had a man teacher when I was older and I didn't like him. I don't know why. There was something about him I didn't like. I didn't trust. Let's put it that way... He used to chase us girls down the stairs you know when the bell went and you'd go down for your break or your dinner. He used to chase the girls down the stairs and we all used to run down the stairs. He used to let the boys go first because it was a mixed class then and then he used to wait for the girls and as you went out he used to run at us and we all used to run down the (stairs) I mean we could have had an accident but the headmistress caught him one day and told him to pack it up.[38]

Others could, like Fred R's headmaster, be biased in favour of some of their young charges. It would seem that some teachers favoured the children that came from better backgrounds, or the children of local shopkeepers who might provide them with a small gift at Christmas time:

> One name of W he was in Gideon Rd the trouble with him he had favourites. If your father or your parents give him Christmas boxes and thing like that you was well away but if you didn't that was it you was you was out of favour.[39]

This favouritism was not always confined to those who could benefit the teacher. Some teachers seem to have chosen their favourites out of pity for an individual child. As Dusty remembers, one teacher favoured him:

> Because of my strict upbringing with father Miss Gordon favoured me with a lot of favours, I got it easier than most kids in class. Discipline was very, very strong.[40]

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[36] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p9

[37] Interview with Fred P (b.1917) p7

[38] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p10

[39] Interview with Peter C (b.1921)

[40] Interview with Dusty (b.1929) p9

Whatever type of school a child attended it would seem that their experience of school life was, to a large extent, determined by the attitudes of the teaching staff and most particularly the character, attitudes and ideas of the head.[41]

2.4 Class and Education

It was not simply in the classroom that class and social background played a part in a child's educational opportunities. To large extent, where a child lived, and his or her social background determined the type of education they received. A study published in 1926 by Kenneth Lindsey showed that while the national average of children leaving the elementary schools to go on to secondary (grammar) schools was 9.5% only 6.4% of London's elementary school population progressed to a higher form of education; for which, in most cases, their parents would have been expected to pay[42] Lindsey also showed that the chances of going to a secondary (grammar) school depended on the area from which a child came. He studied the 1919 scholarship records of 7 poor and 7 rich areas of London (Table 3.3) and found that 125 junior county scholarships had been won in the poor areas (1.3 per 1000), 245 had been gained in the rich areas (5.3 per 1000) while the average for London as a whole was 2.6 per 1000. He also found that individual schools in different areas performed better than others: thus 'in Bermondsey, Keeton's Road and Alma Road schools, situated in the best neighbourhood, won 112 out of the 309 scholarships gained in Bermondsey between 1914 and 1923', while there were 'individual schools in Lewisham, like Stillness Road, which won more scholarships than all the elementary schools in Bermondsey put together.'[43]

Table 2.3 Figures indicative of the relation between impoverished environment and the educational attainments of London Children

	Number county gained in 1919	of junior scholarships		Per 1000 children in average
Seven poor areas	Boys	Girls	Total	Attendance
Bethnal Green	11	14	25	1.2
Lambeth	01	04	05	0.5
Limehouse	10	08	18	1.3
Poplar	07	12	19	1.5
Shoreditch	11	06	17	1.0
Battersea North	08	21	29	2.3

[41] See also section 2.7

[42] Kenneth Lindsey *Social Progress and Education Waste* [London 1926] p 67

[43] Ibid pp.84-88

Paddington Nth	02	10	12	1.8
Total	50	75	125	1.3 average
Seven better areas				
Brixton	07	15	22	3.4
Dulwich	20	20	40	6.3
Hampstead	09	12	23	4.3
Lewisham East	39	33	72	7.7
Streatham	17	08	25	5.8
Kensington Sth	07	08	15	5.1
Woolwich West	30	18	48	5.0
Total	129	116	245	5.3 average
London as a whole	789	779	1568	2.6

Taken From Kenneth Lindsey, *Social Progress and Education Waste* p.84

More generally, Lindsey found that approximately 3% of all secondary school entrants had unskilled fathers, while about 40% came from the homes of skilled workers with some 45% coming from lower middle class homes (35% from office and clerical workers and 10% from shop owners); the rest was made up of the children of widows etc.[44] These figures are, of course, what one might expect when it is remembered that the majority of secondary school pupils were required to pay fees, thus only the brightest children coming from poor families would have been able to gain a place through the county scholarship scheme, while the children of the better off could buy their way into the secondary school system.

Lindsey found that the children of dockworkers and labourers were almost untouched by the scholarship examination.[45] In the poor areas of Lambeth, for example, only 5 children (1 boy and 4 girls) gained scholarships in 1919 (0.5 per 1000), the lowest in the survey, while in Limehouse only 18 children (1.3 per 1000) gained secondary school places, as opposed to the more affluent Brixton where 22 children gained places (3.4 per 1000), or Lewisham where 78 scholarships were gained representing 7.7 per 1000 (the highest in the survey).

It must also be remembered that gaining a scholarship did not automatically mean that a child was guaranteed a secondary school place. Firstly a school had to be found that would accept the child, and then the parents had to be prepared to allow the child to

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[44] Lindsey *Social Progress and Education Waste* p 110

[45] Ibid.

go. A secondary school education often caused a strain on a family's income, not only for the extra costs involved in providing expensive uniforms and equipment but also in the loss of the child's income. As stated above, most secondary schools required an undertaking from parents that their child would complete four, or in some cases five years of education thus leaving school and entering the workplace one or two years after their contemporaries.

The provision of both central and secondary (grammar) schools reflected the class differences between the different areas of London. A study of the location of both central and secondary (grammar) schools in relation to the 1931 New Survey of London poverty maps reveals that both these types of school were mainly situated in better areas.

The New Survey's maps of the social conditions of London, which were based on information provided for the year 1930, were, as Booth's original maps had been, divided into various types of streets. In the *New Survey* there were five types of street which were colour coded thus: - red for the middle class and wealthy, pink for the skilled (upper) working class, purple for the mass of unskilled labourers and others who were above the poverty line (i.e.: ordinary working class); blue denoted those who were living below the poverty line (the respectable poor), while black showed the lowest class of degradation or semi- criminal areas. The authors recognised that some streets might contain more than one group of people so they further divided the streets by adding strips of another colour onto a street with one dominant colour. Thus there were red streets with a pink stripe to indicate a road that was predominantly wealthy but containing a few upper working- class residents. A street that was predominantly upper working class but containing a few middle-class residents would be pink with a red stripe while an ordinary working-class area with a criminal element would be shown as purple with a black-stripe (see map 2). [46]

In order to investigate the distribution of post 11+ schools in the capital 175 out of the 189 central, county secondary, and non-provided secondary schools listed in the LCC's 1937 schools handbook were plotted onto the *New Survey's* 'social condition' maps. Of the remaining 14 schools, 8 were excluded because they were within the City of London, which was not included in the *New Survey*, 2 were left out

[46] *New Survey of London Life and Labour*. IV & VIII.

because they fell outside the survey area and the remaining 4 simply could not be found on the maps.[47]

In order to clarify the classification, those streets that have an overlapping population have been taken as the higher class, thus, as can be seen from the diagram below, the great majority [91%] of post 11+ schools were to be found in middle and upper working-class streets. Only 6% of post 11+ schools were to be found in ordinary working-class streets and only 3% in the poorest and semi-criminal streets.

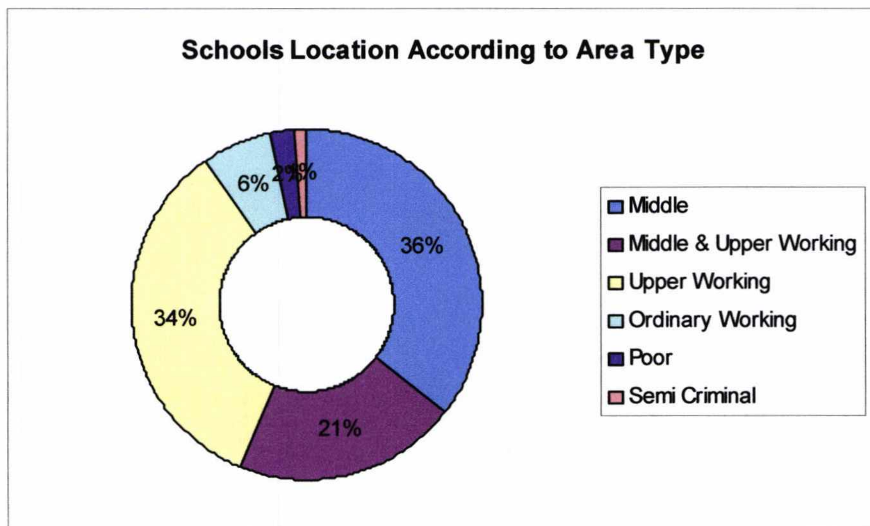

Figure 2.1 Post 11+ School Location According to social class of streets

If this data is examined more closely it is found that out of the 80 central schools studied 36 (45%) were in upper working-class areas, 31(39%) were in middle- class areas. Thus only 13 central schools (16%) were in ordinary working-class or poor districts. An examination of secondary (grammar) school provision shows that of the 27 county secondary schools 21 [78%] were in middle-class areas, 4 [15%] were in upper working-class areas and only 2 [7%] were in either ordinary working-class or poor areas.

It was also found that in line with the council's policy to improve the provision of girls' secondary schools, 15 of the county secondary (grammar) schools were single sex girls' schools. Furthermore it was discovered that the only mixed county secondary (grammar) school, St George's in the East (Cable St), was also the only such school in a poor area. As might be expected the provision of non -provided secondary (grammar) schools in the capital reflected this bias towards the better off districts with 46 of the 69

[47] Schools Handbook LCC (1937)

schools studied [67%] found in middle-class areas, 20 [29%] in upper working class areas and only 3 [4%] in working-class areas, and all three of these were old church foundation schools around which the area had declined. Thus it is clear that even as late as 1937 there was almost no provision for post 11+ secondary type education for children from either the ordinary working-class or, more especially, the poorest areas of London. The few children from these areas who did manage to gain a place at a central or secondary (grammar) school would have had to travel often quite long distances outside their own neighbourhoods and so away from their old friends and playmates to go to school.

So what was the attitude of the working classes towards the various strands of education that were open to them and what effect did the schooling that they received have on their own views of themselves? Out of the thirty one people interviewed for this study nineteen reported that they had remained within the ordinary elementary school system, sixteen of them having remained at the same school or at least within the same building throughout their education. Of the remaining contributors one (Derrick) went to a county grammar school as a fee-paying pupil,[48] and three gained places at central schools. The remaining seven were all under the age of 11 when schooling in London was interrupted at the outbreak of the war. No fewer than six of these people reported that the coming of the war had interrupted their schooling. In two cases the war had brought a premature end to their education at the age of eleven.[49]

This selection process at age of eleven seems to have labelled many of the contributors for life. Those that did not achieve a place at a central or grammar school often described themselves as' not very bright' or 'not very clever'. This may of course have been true, but it would seem that the selection process at the age of eleven and consequently, the type of school that a child attended, could have a lasting impact on their future views of themselves and on their aspirations and indeed their whole lives

What was the attitude of those in authority towards the education of working-class children? There seems to have been a marked lack of understanding of the whole working-class culture of the period, and of children from the working class in particular, by those in authority, as can be seen both in their the comments made at the time, and in

[48] The fees were £3 10s per term.

[49] In both cases the contributors had remained in London throughout the war and had not attended school regularly after the schools were closed in September 1939.

the documentary record. It is interesting to note, for example, how the description of elementary school children changed in official correspondence. In 1919 elementary school children were referred to by L.H .Selby-Bigge, the permanent secretary to the Board of Education, as coming from 'the elementary school class',[50] while some ten years later they were being referred to by his successor, E.H. Pelham, as coming from 'the elementary school type'. This seems to reflect, at least in semantic terms, a change of attitude towards working-class children.

The use of the term 'Elementary School Class' seems to reflect the link between the working class and elementary education. The attitude would seem to have been that all that the working classes required was an elementary education that would teach them the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic that would equip them for a life of physical labour, and that any more advanced form of learning would be wasted on them. By the early 1930s there seems to have been a shift away from this link between the working class as a whole and elementary education. The use of the term 'Elementary School Type' seems to break this link between class and education, suggesting that it was being recognised that, at least for some working-class children, something more than an elementary standard of education was suitable and indeed desirable. This may have reflected changes in work patterns and practices with the need for a more educated and skilled workforce. But it also seems to reflect a change in attitudes towards the working-class child in that it was recognised, as the Hadow committee had shown, that many such children could benefit from, and indeed deserved, a more advanced form of education and that a basic elementary education was only suitable for a declining minority of working-class children who would go on to a life of unskilled manual labour.

Cyril Burt the LCC's educational psychologist subscribed to the theory that 20% of London's children were backward, and that the majority of these children were to be found in the poorest areas of the capital.[51] He showed no particular surprise at this perhaps because of his eugenicist views, but rather used it as a weapon in his campaign against universal secondary education and the raising of the school leaving age. He argued that the provision of secondary education for all would be a waste of resources as

[50] See for example PRO ED11/80 Correspondence between the Board of Education and the Ministry of Labour 1923-26

[51] L.S Hearnshaw, *Cyril Burt Psychologist* (London 1979) pp 12-18

20% of London's children could not and would not benefit from either an extra year in school or a more advanced type of education.[52] But this says more about Burt and his attitudes than it does about the intellect or the abilities of London's working-class children.

2.5 The Growth of Educational Testing and The Influence of the Eugenics Movement

It was in 1904 that Charles Spearman published an article in the *American Journal of Psychology* in which he claimed that human ability consisted of two factors: general intelligence 'g' and the residual factor, 's', which were specific to a particular skill. This idea meant that it was possible to quantify the intelligence of an individual and was taken up enthusiastically by the mental testers and examiners of the time.[53] Much earlier in 1880 Francis Galton had said in his book *Hereditary and Genius* that mental characteristics followed the same distribution as any other human feature like eye colour or height and so could be plotted to produce a bell shaped Gaussian Distribution curve.[54] Spearman's 'g 'factor gave the mental testers something to measure that would allow them to quantify intelligence and so plot Galton's graph of mental ability. In 1905 two Frenchmen, Binet and Simon, whose work was to be the foundation of the Group Intelligence tests that were to become the basis of many of the 11+ examinations, published their first series of individual intelligence tests. These were revised in 1908 and again in1911. It was also in 1911 that the German psychologist William Stern developed the notion of the Intelligence Quotient or IQ. This took the mental age as determined by the Binet and Simon test, divided it by the chronological age and multiplied by 100, rounding off any fractions, to give a whole number. This was then taken as a measure of intelligence. [55]

By the time that Cyril Burt was appointed as the first educational psychologist by the LCC in 1913 he was already a keen proponent of mental testing, or psychometrics as it was called. He had known Galton as a child and had written his first article entitled 'Experimental tests of general intelligence' in 1909. Burt was a member of the Eugenics

[52] Ibid pp 12-18

[53] Gillian Sutherland, *Ability, Merit and Measurement: Mental Testing and English Education 1880-1940* (London 1984) pp 121-123:

[54] Ibid. p.116

[55] Ibid. pp 120-127

Society and believed in the ideas of heredity and social hygiene.[56] He had developed his own group intelligence tests while working at Liverpool University. These were eventually published together with his revised version of the Binet-Simon individual test and a set of educational attainment tests as *Mental and Scholastic Tests* in 1921.[57]

The LCC began to use group intelligence tests in 1917 as a check on their scholarship examination results, and continued to use the tests in this way until 1924 when it was proposed by the their new chief examiner, Mr B.C. Wallis, that large scale experiments be started to determine whether group intelligence tests could be used in place of the existing two stage scholarship examination. The financial cutbacks of that year delayed the start of the experiment and it was not until 1927 that the LCC began trials of group intelligence tests. Some 800 children in the Chelsea division were chosen to try the tests a week after they had taken the Junior County Scholarship Examination. The results were mixed. While there was fairly close agreement between the examination and intelligence tests at both ends of the scale there was a marked discrepancy in the middle. This led Wallis to conclude that intelligence tests of the type used would not be a suitable method of selection and consequently despite a second larger trial using some 2,000 children conducted in 1929, the LCC decided not to use intelligence testing as a method of selecting children for secondary and central school places.[58]

What of the Examinations that were used by the LCC ? It was recognised at the time that the Junior County Scholarship Examinations favoured children from better homes. This, it was felt, was a result of the better breeding and family background of such children. No account seems to have been taken of the slant of the questions many of which talked about things that the children of the poor would have almost no experience. There was a strong belief in the hereditary theory of intelligence that was being propagated at the time by the eugenics movement. Burt, for example, as mentioned above, believed that 20% of London's school population was backward and that the majority of these children were the offspring of backward parents and were to be

[56] L.S Hearnshaw, *Cyril Burt Psychologist* pp. 1-46

[57] Sutherland, *Ability, Merit and Measurement* p133

[58] Ibid pp 224-269

found in the slum districts. It was therefore hardly surprising that schools in the poorest areas supplied the fewest scholarship candidates.[59]

Many schools, like Angela Rodaway's, ran special scholarship classes where the chosen few would be taught the skills and the subjects needed to pass the examination, while their classmates got on with the normal elementary school curriculum:

> At school there were four of us who, by reason of our intelligence were considered likely winners of scholarships, at eleven. For this reason we missed certain classes so that we should, as quickly as possible, reach a class where scholarship work was taught and we could spend one or two years at it.[60]

Angela Rodaway also recalled the stress and emotional trauma associated with being selected to prepare for, and take, the examination which as she recalled was held centrally:

> For the scholarship exam we went to Thornhill Road and sat in the large strange hall, in a strange school. I was glad that one of our teachers was there...My mother has assured me and everyone else that I was not nervous, so I assumed that my feeling of fear and reluctance must be some thing different.[61]

She went on to recall her reaction when the head teacher announced the results during school assembly:

> When I realised after school prayers one morning that we were now going to be given the scholarship results everything became blurred. Violet was called out to the front of the hall and a wave of clapping rose that made my head swim. I started to clap, like everyone else but in a kind of hysteria. The headmaster called Titch then Harry. When he said 'Three I think that's very good don't you?' I knew I hadn't got in. and I wondered what it would be like going home at dinnertime to say that I had failed....The headmaster was speaking again and I hardly heard what he said 'Just a minute there's one more.' The voice went on, but it was not my name. Somebody poked me in the back "Go on! You!"... I must have put my names in the wrong order on the entrance form and he had read them out that way.[62]

Throughout the inter-war period the ideas of the eugenics movement were to colour the attitudes and opinions of those involved in education and, in particular, those involved in the debate that surrounded the issue of selection and educational testing

2.6 The School Board Man

The 1870 (Forster) Education Act had made it compulsory for all local authorities to establish elected school boards. The Act gave those boards discretionary powers to establish their own schools, where necessary, and to pass bye-laws to make school

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[59] Hearnshaw, *Cyril Burt Psychologist* pp 25-46

[60] Angela Rodaway *A London Childhood* p51

[61] Ibid p65

[62] Ibid p 66

attendance compulsory. The 1876 (Sandon) Education Act laid the duty of ensuring that all children received some form of elementary education on parents and required the newly formed school boards to set up attendance committees. The 1880 Education Act finally made it compulsory that all children between the ages of 5 and 10 receive some form of elementary education, and required the school attendance committees to enact bye-laws to enforce school attendance.

After its election in late 1870 one of the first actions of the London School Board, (LSB) was to establish a committee to draw up a set of bye-laws to make schooling compulsory within the capital, and London's first school attendance bye-laws were approved in December 1871.[63]

The bye-laws affected all children between the ages of 5 and 13, with all children from 5 to 10 being compelled to attend school full-time, but section 74 of the 1870 Act provided for a mandatory system of half and full-time exemptions for children aged between 10 and 13 (see Chapter 5).[64] There was considerable resistance to these bye-laws, especially from the poorest areas, and it was soon found necessary to employ somebody to enforce them, giving rise to that scourge of generations of school children the 'school board man'. The London School Board recognised that they had to change the attitudes of the parents and so decided that enforcement was 'to be carried out, especially at first, with as much gentleness and consideration for the circumstances and feelings of the parents as is consistent with its effective operation'.[65]

School attendance committees were established in each of the ten electoral divisions within the capital each having a superintendent and team of visitors. By 1874 it was decided that visitors should be appointed in the ratio of 3000:1 and so the School Attendance Service was born. Unlike other areas of the country, the School Attendance Service in London was to develop separately from the Children's Care Committees and School Welfare and Medical Services as an independent service.

By the end of the First World War the attendance service had grown significantly and was employing a force of about five hundred paid officers who, through the divisional superintendents, reported directly to the council's chief education

[63] David Rubinstein, *School Attendance in London 1870-1904: A Social History* (Hull 1969) p35

[64] Ibid.

[65]Stuart Maclure, *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1980* (London 1970) pp.32-33

officer.[66] As Williams et al point out, the work of the attendance service was generally ignored in any discussion of school welfare and indeed many of the middle-class volunteer care workers who sought to look after the welfare of London's working-class school children did not even know that the service existed [67]

Why was there this apparent lack of recognition of the work of the School Attendance Officers? Firstly because the service had developed separately from the other welfare services and was part of the divisional office structure and not based upon individual schools, it was not generally recognised as being part of the school welfare service; but rather as a separate educational police force charged with enforcing the attendance regulations. Secondly the other sections of the welfare service seem to have regarded the attendance service with condescension because it relied on a paid staff and did not make use of volunteers. The third reason was one of class and gender for while other arms of the school welfare service were run and operated by middle- class women, often with university degrees or other qualifications, the attendance service staff, by contrast, consisted overwhelmingly of apparently uneducated working-class men. (See below).

By the early 1920s the Attendance Officers, as the Visitors had been renamed, had a whole range of duties in addition to their basic task of enforcing school attendance. This included the recovery of the costs of school meals and medical treatment, the issuing of statutory notices to the parents of verminous children, providing reports to the courts and, as will be discussed in chapter five, the control of child employment. Under the 1934 Unemployment Act they also became responsible for the enforcement of attendance of the juvenile unemployed at instruction centres

The wide range of their duties was recognised in 1930 when their job title was changed from 'Attendance Officers' to 'School Enquiry Officers', although in both the council's official correspondence and at Education Committee meetings, they were still generally referred to as Attendance Officers, while to the children they policed they were still the dreaded 'School Board Man'.

The LCC area was divided into 12 divisions each with a separate staff under the control of a divisional superintendent. The staffing of each divisional office was

[66] Susan Williams, Patrick Ivin and Caroline Morse, *The Children of London: Attendance and welfare at School 1870-1990* (London 2001) pp 66-69

[67] Ibid pp 66-69 and pp 81-82

flexible, with the use of unattached and temporary attendance officers who could be dismissed when not required. Thus in the wake of the financial crisis precipitated by the Wall Street Crash of 1929 all of the temporary officers were dismissed, and the unattached officers were permanently assigned to a divisional office to fill the void. This caused serious problems in some areas like North Kensington where, in 1933, the divisional superintendent complained that, because one of his officers was on long term sick leave and there were no longer any unattached officers to fill the gap, there had been a marked increase in the level of absenteeism.[68] The council finally relented in 1934 when six unattached officers were appointed; this number was soon increased to ten providing cover for sickness and holidays within the divisional offices. The ratio of Attendance Officers to children was also used as a way of cost cutting. Thus in 1921 the ratio was down to just 2800:1 but was raised to 3100:1 as part of the cut backs forced upon the education authority by the Geddes Axe and remained high until 1934 when the ratio was reduced to 2900:1. Thus, even towards the end of the 1930s, the ratio of attendance officers to schoolchildren was never as low as it had been before the Geddes committee had wielded its axe.

While the total number in staff of the attendance service varied year-by-year, depending on the number of temporary officers, the number of permanent attached posts remained approximately the same. Thus in 1927 there were a total of 435 permanent staff comprising; 12 divisional superintendents and 12 assistant superintendents, 63 office assistants, and 343 attendance officers. These were divided up between the 12 divisions so that on average each division comprised; 1 divisional superintendent, 1 assistant superintendent, 5 office assistants, and 29 attendance officers.[69] In London while most of the office assistants were women, none of the attendance officers were female, as it was argued that it was not a suitable job for a woman.

It is interesting to look briefly at the reasons given by LCC officials for not employing female attendance officers. When approached by a deputation from the National Union of Women Teachers in 1925 on the issue of the employment of women as attendance officers, the LEA pointed out that there was nothing in the regulations to prevent women from becoming attendance officers. They explained that a woman had

[68] LMA file EO/STA/3/25 Enquiry Officers General File (1924-32)

[69] LMA EO/STA/3/29 Duties of Enquiry Officers (1927-39)

been employed in the Stepney area for some 15 years before the war, but that she had covered only a small district [about half the size of a normal district] and was mainly concerned with the work of rescuing children from abuse. They went on to say that two women had been employed on such duties during the war, but had been found to be unsatisfactory.[70] They also pointed out that in a recent recruitment drive, which had led to 701 applications, no women had applied.[71] The authority also claimed that 'in certain areas, particularly where bad, it would be difficult for them (women) to carry out their duties' and that women 'frequently felt the effects of prolonged strain and inclement weather and were not able to withstand fatigue to the same degree as the men with whom they would be working'.[72]

The officials of the education authority repeated these claims in March 1936 when a female member of the Education Committee questioned the Chief Education Officer as to why there were no women enquiry officers. They also pointed out that as the work often involved visits and patrols at night and early morning it was not a safe occupation for women.[73] A subsequent enquiry by the education officer, conducted at the insistence of the education committee, revealed that thirteen education authorities in England had women attendance officers but in only one area were they not also performing care work.[74] The Education Committee of the LCC passed a resolution on 29th November 1938 that women should be employed as special enquiry officers particularly to deal with child welfare, but the full council rejected this on 8th March 1939 because it was felt to be unfair to recruit women directly to fill senior enquiry officer posts. However, a woman enquiry officer was employed by the council at the end of June 1939, but only to deal with juvenile court enquiries relating to girls.[75] Throughout the inter-war period the Guild of Attendance Officers was opposed to the employment of women, fearing that this might lower the status and so the salaries of its members.

[70] These two women were employed from 1915-1919 without any complaint but were suddenly found to be unsatisfactory when the supply of men increased as soldiers returned from the war.

[71] LMA EO/WEL/3/30 Employment of Women as enquiry officers

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

So what were the normal duties of a school attendance officer? Principally they were responsible for ensuring that all eligible children attended school. To do this they kept a record of every house in their district below a certain rateable value (in 1924 this was £28), noting the name of the families and the age and number of any children that lived there. The Attendance Officers were instructed to be careful to note the homes of the local shopkeepers and any members of the professional middle classes, like the doctor or factory manager, who might be found living in the poorer parts of their districts, the children of whom, like those children living in homes of higher rateable values, were assumed to be attending private schools, and so were beyond the authority of the attendance service. Thus it was only the homes of the working class that were likely to be visited by the 'School Board Man.'

Every Friday afternoon it was the duty of the attendance officers to collect all of the attendance records of every pupil from every elementary school in their district and return them to their office. There they would be sorted and checked on Saturday morning. On Monday they would make out a list of visits to the homes of all the absentees who could not provide a valid excuse. They would then spend the remainder of the week carrying out those visits. While out on the streets they were also on the look out for children who were not at school and would stop and question any child they found, returning those without a good excuse to their school. As well as this routine visiting and patrolling the attendance officers were also required to visit homes in the evenings, either to collect fees for medical treatment or school meals, or to deliver statutory notices.[76] Children attending secondary and central schools were only investigated if their head teacher brought them to the attention of the attendance service.

What were they supposed do about persistent truants? When a case of persistent truanting was detected, either through the attendance records or from reports by teachers, the attendance officer would, in the first instance, visit the home and warn the parents. If the child's attendance did not improve or a further offence was detected a formal written warning, or notice 'A', was issued. This warned the parents that they were in breach of the bye-laws and were liable for prosecution. If this did not work a second notice 'B' was issued. This ordered the parents to appear before the local attendance committee at a given date and time to explain the child's absence from school. If this did not work, or the members of the attendance committee were not

satisfied with parents' answers, then the last resort was to issue a 'D' notice which informed the parents of the authorities intention to prosecute.[77]

How effective were these measures? They seem to have been rather ineffectual if, as in the case of Ernie, a child did not want to go to school, and nothing could make him:

> I never went a lot to school because as I said I didn't take too easy to school. It took me a long time to settle so I didn't go to school a lot... I didn't tell anyone, I stayed away I just stayed away and went me own way...Time was taken up with just anything in the day. Canal, I used to like going over the canal with bits of wood and messing about...They were talking about Borstal at one time and Christ knows what, but the only way it really affected me was me dad because I didn't know of it so I didn't know what it meant to be afraid of it. You know, so it didn't mean a lot to me then.[78]

Other parents, like Fred R's mother, chose not to believe the reports of their offspring's truanting and simply destroyed the warning notices:

> Used to take that letter home to your mother. Used to take it home. She'd say,' what's it all about you didn't go to school? So and so they don't know what they're talking about round at that school, give us it' (and she would) screw it up and throw it away.[79]

What sorts of excuses did the parents offer the attendance committees for their children's absences? The register of cases for hearing by the Naphur Street School Attendance Sub-Committee between July 1932 and January 1934 records the excuses they had received from parents. This shows that the most common excuse was that the child was sick, but, when challenged, the parents were unable to provide a medical certificate (Fig 2.2).[80] In many cases the officers reported that either they could get no reply when they called or were unable to see the parents. It is perhaps surprising that even at this late date some parents still claimed that their children had no suitable footwear to attend school.[81] A more detailed examination reveals that 55 children 34 girls and 21 boys were kept at home 'to help mother' either because they were needed to

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[76] LMA EO/STA/3/29 School Enquiry Officer's duties 1927-39

[77] LMA EO/STA/3/28 General Instructions for the Guidance of School Attendance Officers

[78] Interview with Ernie (b1928) p6

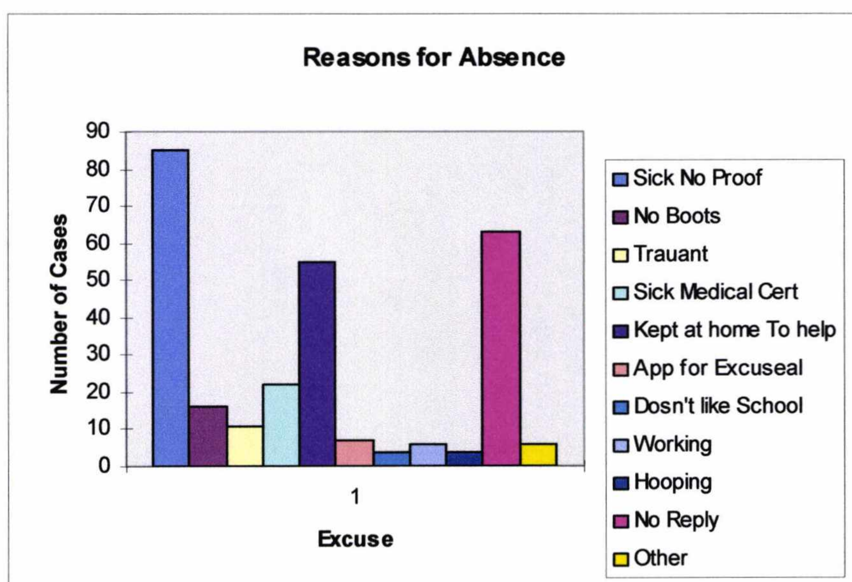
[79] Interview with Fred R (b1928) p10

[80] This is not as surprising as it might seem at first glance for as will be shown in the next chapter working-class parents were generally reluctant to take their children to see a doctor because of the cost and it may well have been due to the cost of acquiring one that parents were unable or more often unwilling to provide the education authorities with a medical certificate to prove that their child's absence had been due to illness.

[81] It would seem that this was a particular problem in the early 1930s when there were high levels of unemployment in London and the means test was at its height.

look after a new baby or because their mother was ill. One boy, Edward Graves, was regularly kept at home to help his widowed mother to 'bring fruit home from the market'.[82] Sometimes absences were because of friction between parents and the school. The register records that on 3rd October 1932 Henry Parker aged 8 had been taken out of school 'because of disciplinary action' while on 27th February 1933 it is recorded that Jessie Blackhall was said to be ill but the parents could provide no proof. The attendance officer noted that there had been 'differences with the headmistress.'

Figure 2.2 Reasons for Absence from Napier St School Attendance Committee 1932-34



Taken from LMA EO/PS/11/8 Cases for Hearing at Meeting of Local Attendance Sub Committee Napier St 1932-34

The ultimate sanction open to the Attendance Committee was to prosecute the parents under the 1921 Education Act for failure to ensure that their children received a proper education. How often was this final deterrent used and how successful was it in forcing reluctant children back into school? Although the figures are not complete it can be seen from table 2.4 that the number of prosecutions for failure to attend school and for working illegally fell steadily throughout the inter-war period.

[82] LMA EO/PS/11/8 Cases for hearing at meetings of Local attendance Sub-Committee Napier Street 11th June 1933

Table 2.4 Proceedings Taken Under the Education Acts Relating to non-attendance and Employment

YEAR	SUMMONS ISSUED	CONVICTIONS	DISMISSED	WITHDRAWN NO:	%
1921	9384	6544	9	2461	26.2
1922	4909	3092	0	1328	28.1
1923	4449	2899	5	1198	26.9
1924	3965	2603	2	0984	24.8
1925	3945	2091	1	0916	23.2
1926	3740	2565	0	0808	21.6
1927	No figures available				
1928	3439	2317	3	0760	23.2
1929	3641	2532	8	0778	21.3
1930	No figure available				
1931	2776	1908	6	0604	26.5
1932	2396	1545	4	0578	24.1
1933	2233	1422	3	0576	25.8
1934	1969	1325	5	0454	23.1
1935	1984	1346	4	0458	23.1
1936	1636	1110	1	0317	19.4
1937	1886	1262	6	0460	24.3

Taken From LCC Statistics 1922-1938

From these figures it might be assumed that as the number of prosecutions fell so the numbers of truanting children also fell but, in fact, this is not the case. An examination of attendance records shows that the numbers of children who were absent from school at any one time was fairly constant at about 12% throughout the period.[83] Why then

[83] Williams et al, *The Children of London* p 66

were there fewer prosecutions? The answer to this question is simply that it was found to be too expensive and, more importantly, ineffective. The normal punishment inflicted by the London magistrates on parents who were unwilling, or unable, to get their children into school was a small fine, usually ranging from five shilling to about a pound. This, while signalling the state's displeasure at the child's absence from school, did nothing to return that child to school. Until 1933 magistrates also had the power to send persistent truants to an industrial school. This power had existed since the 1880 Education Act, which had made school attendance compulsory. The Act had been widely used in the latter years of the nineteenth century, with special truant schools being established under the Industrial School Acts. These provided a short sharp and often brutal shock to the child who was normally detained for three months under a harsh regime of strict and often violent discipline. After this the child would be released on conditional licence, the condition being that she, or more often, he regularly attend a nominated school. For those who broke the terms of their licence there were dire and frequently very painful consequences.[84] The man-power shortage of the First World War led to the closure of the truant schools as staff were transferred to help run the long-term residential schools. Thus, by the start of the inter-war period, although the power was still enshrined in the 1918 and 1921 Education Acts, magistrates were reluctant to send children to long-term industrial schools for what many now recognised as a trivial offence. Another option, and one which was used with increasing frequency in difficult cases during the inter-war period, was to persuade the parents to go to the juvenile court and declare the child to be beyond their control. Once it was established that a child was beyond parental control the courts then had a duty to commit that child to an industrial school and later a Home Office Approved School. [85]Thus the ultimate sanction for failure to attend school was shifted away from the parents and placed instead on the children who, if they persistently refused to go to school, could find themselves incarcerated.

[84] For a first offence a child would spend three months at a truant school for a second offence they would receive six strokes of the birch and six months at a truant school and for a third twelve strokes and confinement until their 14th or in some cases 16th birthday.

[85] Under the terms of the 1933 Children Act a child declared as, beyond parental control, could be placed under the supervision of a probation officer or committed to an approved school for anything between three and five years, or in some cases until they were eighteen.

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In addition to the Ordinary Attendance Officers, each division had three Special Officers (except the Stepney & City Division, which had four). These officers were senior men with at least ten years' experience their responsibilities were:

(A) The Children's Care Committee Officer who was required

i. To follow up difficult cases referred by the school (care) committees.
ii. To collect charges for meals, spectacles and medical treatment in difficult cases.
iii. To Refer cases to the NSPCC.

(B) Juvenile Delinquency Officer whose duties were

i. To attend the juvenile court and to submit reports on the home conditions, school records etc. of children charged.
ii. To attend the care section of the special schools sub-committee when cases of juvenile delinquency were considered, and present to the magistrates the suggestions of the committee as to the disposal of these cases.
iii. To report on the home conditions in connection with applications to release children from industrial (later approved) schools on licence.
iv. To advise parents, head teachers etc. in cases of troublesome children.

(C) Employment of children in street trading (see chapter five).[86]

Who were the Attendance Officers? In London they were mainly middle-aged upper working-class men. The minimum age requirement for entry was 25 and older men in their late 30s or early 40s were preferred as it was felt that such men 'could exert a fatherly influence on both parents and children'[87] Often they were retired police officers or regular soldiers while others, particularly the temporary officers, were recruited from other departments of the council.[88] The one common factor was that they were drawn from the working class and consequently policed the children of their own communities. This marked them out as separate from staff of the other children's care services who were overwhelming middle-class women.

What was the reaction of the parents and children to these 'policemen' of education? It is of course difficult at this distance to get any real feeling for the attitudes of parents towards the attendance service but, according to Williams et al who looked at a collection of oral testimony, the work of the attendance service was generally welcomed and supported by parents.[89] According to Maclure however, the working classes saw the attendance officer as 'a necessary evil, rather like the rent collector or the

[86] EO/WEL/3/27 School Enquiry Officers Rates of Pay

[87]LMA EO/STA/3/25 School Enquiry Officers General File 1924-39

[88] Ibid.

[89] Williams et al *The Children of London* p31-33

sanitary inspector, to be tolerated and when possible overcome'.[90] As has already been shown, some parents seem to have viewed the attendance officer as an intrusion into their relationship with their children. On the whole, however, parents seem to have agreed that their children should attend school and co-operated with the attendance service in returning their errant children to school:

> I can remember him (the school board man) coming round, but he never come to us a lot, only about my brother, and that's when my mum used to know that he wasn't at school. All she used to say to the school board man was 'I know where to find him I know where he'll be'.[91]

From the oral testimony it would seem that for many children, it was something of a game to dodge the school board man. Even those children who had a good attendance record knew the school board man and would run, and in some cases hide, if they saw him on the street:

> I used to see a lot of them going out. They see the school board and they run like anything and if you do come out and see them 'what you doing home' 'I'm not well'. 'Well what you doing out then'.[92]

And every schoolchild knew what the school board man did and, what would happen, if he caught you outside when you should have been in school:

> He used to come round if you wasn't well. If you had a day off school he used to knock on the door. Mum used to say 'come in' 'Your child' 'no no she' s not well, got flu' or what ever it was. But he was, oh yes, and he used to walk round the streets. And all if he (see) any kids playing out he used to take them back to school. Very, very strict they was at school then. You couldn't play hooky then. [93]

Why then did children choose to truant? We have already seen above that some children, particularly boys like Fred R, refused to accept the discipline of school life. Some parents, like Fred's mother, refused to believe that their child could be a truant. Other children, like Ernie, did not like school and refused to go. In his case it seems that he was only saved from being sent to an Approved School by the disruption to London's educational system caused by the outbreak of war. Although there was a hard core of truants like Ernie and Fred most of the children who deliberately missed school only did so occasionally. There was, of course, a whole range of reasons for truanting, one of the most common being peer pressure: a particular child being dared to do it by their

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[90] Maclure *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1970* p

[91] Interview with Minnie (b.1905); her younger brother used to spend his time in the local cinema rather than at school see chapter 4

[92] Interview with Violet (b.1925) p9

[93] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p11

friends. Another was simply to see what it was like, while some children like Emily would truant to avoid a particular lesson:

> I didn't like the lesson, as I say we used to go home for lunch between 12 and 2, and down the bottom of our turning, on the High street they had a shop one half was greengrocers, the other half was coal. They used to use, and the other half was toffee apples and they lent out the little bikes and that. And I sat on that step all afternoon, and when I come home one of me friend had come home before me and told me mum I wasn't at school. 'Mrs H why wasn't your Emmey at school miss so and so wants to know' so I got home and my mum said 'where have you been young lady' 'bin a school mum' I said 'where have you been' and when my mum spoke in that tone you had to tell her 'I've been sitting on the step up there mum' 'why ' 'I didn't want to go a school' 'so why didn't you tell me you didn't want to go to a school I would have taken you me self.' I got put to bed early I didn't do it any more it wasn't worth the bother.[94]

It was the threat of retribution that seems to have kept most children at school. The school board man was seen as a constant threat in children's lives. These policemen of education knew the persistent truants in their own areas and, more importantly, they knew where to find them. They tended to know all of the local children's hiding places and it was a constant battle, often viewed by the children as an elaborate game of cat and mouse, to find them and return them to school.

2.7 Attitudes Towards Corporal Punishment

The generally accepted view is that corporal punishment was rife in the schools of inter-war Britain. Stephen Humphries in his book *Hooligans or Rebels* provides a grim picture of classroom life with sadistic stick-wielding teachers fighting a constant battle to control rebellious, disillusioned children who were quite capable of fighting back.[95]

A recent paper by Dr Philip Gardner has, however, cast doubt on this picture of conflict, in his interviews with young teachers of the period about their attitudes towards corporal punishment Gardner found that most of the teachers viewed corporal punishment as the last resort and that some, especially women, were ashamed of having used the stick. [96] One described how she had only once caned a boy and had felt physically sick afterwards, while another claimed to have left a school because of the headmaster's excessive use of the cane. Gardner showed how most teachers used the cane as a deterrent, and would use it only as a last resort, seeing its use as an admission of failure on their part. He also found, however, that, according to his interviewees, the

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[94] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p10

[95] Steven Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-Class Childhood and youth 1889-1939* (London 1981)

older teachers of the time were not so squeamish in their use of physical punishment. They seem to have viewed the cane as an essential classroom tool like a textbook, a blackboard or a piece of chalk.

So, what were the attitudes of the officials of the Board of Education and the London County Council's Education Committee towards the use of corporal punishment?

The attitude of the officials of the board can be judged by the reaction of Mr Ainsworth, a senior inspector at the Board, to a series of complaints they received from a Dr Kitching of Inglewood, West Kirby. She wrote to the board in 1934 after a girl had been brought to her having been caned by a male teacher; it was not the fact that the girl had been caned that upset the doctor, but rather that the caning had been administered by a male teacher. Mr Ainsworth replied that it was a matter for the LEA and that, while the Board did not interfere with local practices, they had stated in their guidance to teachers that corporal punishment should be used sparingly. This did not satisfy Dr Kitching, who then wrote to the British Medical Journal and started a lively correspondence on the whole issue of the corporal punishment of girls.

Dr Kitching did not leave it there. She continued her campaign, and in 1937 wrote to the Board again to enquire about the results of her previous correspondence. Of more concern to Mr Ainsworth was that she also wrote to a number of Members of Parliament. So effective was her campaign that he described her in an official reply to one MP as 'an indefatigable campaigner against corporal punishment of girls', who would never be satisfied until the corporal punishment of girls by male teachers was banned'.[97]

It is interesting to note that the good Dr Kitching did not object to the application of corporal punishment to boys nor, for that matter, to the physical punishment of girls by female teachers; her only objection was to the physical punishment of girls by male teachers.

Although she was never to know it, Dr Kitching was to have some influence on the Board. The Chief Inspector of Schools, in a confidential memo, asked his local

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[96] Philip Gardner, 'The Giant at the Front: Young teachers and corporal punishment in inter-war elementary schools', *History of Education* (1996 vol. 25 no.2) pp 141-163.

[97] PRO ED11/245 Corporal punishment

inspectors to report on the standard of corporal punishment in their areas.[98] Their reports give a window on the attitudes of head teachers, education authorities and the inspectors themselves.

There were a range of responses to this request. The inspector for Birmingham, for example, simply replied that 'teachers use corporal punishment for mild offences', while the Nottingham inspector noted that 'assistant teachers occasionally use corporal punishment'. He went on to report that 'Headmasters say that the punishment book is never asked for and has therefore fallen into disuse.'[99] The inspector makes no comment on this despite the fact that the recording of all corporal punishment in the schools punishment book was required under the regulations. The inspector in Leicester made an interesting discovery. He reported that 'in five schools under women there were only 3 cases of corporal punishment' while one school recorded 32 cases. This school was described as a good school and he commented 'no known explanation of the number of cases could be found'.[100]

In London one inspector reported a school showing 150 cases in a single term. He explained this by saying that the headmaster had cracked down after the school managers had complained to the LEA that the children were ill mannered and that discipline needed looking at. He reported that the LEA was holding an inspection of the running of the school, but excused the high level of punishment by saying that the school was housed in very poor premises and was located in a very poor neighbourhood.

Another London inspector reported that it was 'doubtful if all corporal punishment was entered in the punishment book' as some teachers did not 'differentiate between the need for severe punishment and correction', and that 'the amount of corporal punishment is often a reflection of the personality of the head.' A third inspector found that in a school with 31 recorded punishments nine of these related to three brothers whom he described as coming from a very poor home. This statement seems to imply that there was a direct causal link between poverty and bad behaviour at school, or perhaps the inspector was suggesting that the head teacher picked on 'rough' children as being in need of firm discipline. Or it could be that the inspector was talking about the

[98] Report on the use of Corporal punishment in Schools in PRO ED11/112 Corporal punishment HMI stands for His majesties Inspectors of Schools

[99] Reports from HMI Nottingham in PRO ED11/112

[100] Report from HMI Leicester in PRO ED11/112

family background of the boys in that they came from a home with low moral standards. Whatever the case, it seems obvious that these boys were singled out for punishment.[101] In a fourth case the inspector reported that in two adjacent schools, both in a good area and with good premises, the number of cases of corporal punishment reported were nil and seventy six respectively The inspector said that he could give no explanation for this difference.[102]

The Boards reported conclusions from this enquiry were:

1. That corporal punishment was found in good schools as well as bad.
2. That it was found in all types and sizes of schools
3. That it was found in schools where the children came from prosperous as well as poor homes.

They also found that the extent to which corporal punishment was used depended on the personality of the head, the use of other methods like 'keeping in' (detention), whether the use of corporal punishment was delegated to the staff or restricted to the head. Finally they found that the distribution of corporal punishment was very uneven.

The findings of this confidential enquiry did not lead to any immediate action on the part of the Board. They did not even bother to remind LEAs that it was a statutory requirement that all cases of corporal punishment should be entered in the punishment book. It did, however, lead to the use of corporal punishment in schools being added to the terms of reference for the Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment (The Cadogan Report [1938]). This had originally been intended to look only at the judicial use of corporal punishment.[103]

What was the reaction of parents to the use of corporal punishment in schools? As has already been mentioned above, it is difficult to gauge the attitude of parents towards the use of corporal punishment on their children,. As has already been shown in Chapter one, the physical punishment of children was common in working-class homes, but the use of physical force against their children by an outsider could evoke considerable resentment on the part of some mothers. As Amy recalled, her mother took

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[101] Report of HMI for North Kensington in PROED11/112

[102] Report of HMI for South West London in PROED11/112

[103] Report on The Departmental Committee on Corporal Punishment (Feb 1938) Cmnd 5684. The committee concluded that the practice of flogging both adult and juvenile offenders should cease but saw no harm in the use of corporal punishment in schools.

exception to the physical punishment of her children, but this could make things worse for the child:

> My mother wrote to the County Hall Westminster, she asked them why was it the teachers allowed to whack the children like this. Oh and we went into the schools bad books, oh dear we all were, the teachers couldn't stand us. They'd whack us whenever they could. Taking tales home to your mother. She said 'they are not to whack her boys about, anything wrong you write and tell me. Any whacking to do I'll do it.' They (her children) were more afraid of her than what the teachers were.[104]

Generally though, it seems that parents supported the teachers. The attitude is perhaps best summed up by the response of one mother who told her children that if they got the cane at school then they must have done something to deserve it, and it was no use coming home crying to her because, if they did, she would give them another one.

Most children would seem to have viewed the cane as a normal hazard of school life. It was considered normal, particularly for boys, to be caned. There seems to have been little resentment at the use of the cane when a child had been caught out in committing some youthful crime within the confines of the school, or even on occasions outside the schools grounds:

> I wasn't one of those goody, goody ones I remember once I did get the cane once and that was for a silly thing, because in the them times we used to collect cigarette cards you know used to collect them, and used to play games with them up against the wall...Near the school there was an old pickle factory and one of the boys he went round there and he found a lot of their labels in little elastic bands all the different labels pickled onion, pickled cucumbers and all that. Looked rather similar to cigarette cards, all the colourful designs and all that, and he nicked a few of them, and everyone thought 'oh they are good' so I decided also I would like some. So I went round to the place and I nicked a couple of packets of them. When I got back to school I had the fright of me life because the headmaster had found out about the pickle labels... He called us all to his room a bit scared when I got there he said to me 'did you go in there and take any of these pickle stick-ons' so I owned up and said 'yeah and I had two on me' and I said 'these two' and I was awarded two strokes of the cane and did they hurt oh on one hand held you hand out and if you pulled it back come on other wise you get three. I think it was good thing really to have the cane for something what you shouldn't have done.[105]

The indiscriminate or uneven use of physical punishment on the other hand seems to have lead to feelings of deep resentment towards, and even hatred of, some teachers who were seen to be over eager to inflict physical punishment on their young charges. Fred M, recalled one teacher:

> We had a basket he was a Scotch man he used to hit you. He used to walk around all day long with a slipper in his hand. Say you wasn't concentrating, Bang on the back of the head.[106]

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[104] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p13

[105] Interview with Peter (b.1934) p7

[106] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p9

Other teachers used a mixture of physical punishment and humiliation to punish their pupils. Fred P recalled one teacher who made a practice of sending boys on a fruitless search for the cane before punishing them:

> Mr Lee he had a very hard war, he had been a prisoner of war in the 1914-18 war and he came back a little bit of a sadistic man. He wanted to use the cane on every occasion, his favourite trick was to send you round all the classrooms to get the cane and the book, meanwhile he had got the cane and book in his drawer or cupboard there, so when you came back and couldn't find it he'd said I found it hold your hand out four of the best on each hand or two of the best on each hand you know.[107]

This practice of sending children out of the classroom, either to find the instrument of their own chastisement or the punishment book to record the event seems to have been fairly common. Many people recall being sent to fetch the cane and the book, but rather than being a deliberate humiliation of the pupil, more often it was that the cane and punishment book were kept centrally. Other London schools seem to have abided by the LEAs rule that only the head teacher or his or her deputy was allowed to inflict formal corporal punishment. This did not prevent other teachers from using a variety of weapons to inflict their own forms of physical punishment, to which the head teacher invariably turned a blind eye until something went wrong:

> The first teacher I can remember was the one in Sudbourn Road. How old would I be then about 7 I suppose. And I remember him because he was a brute of a man. He was the chap who controlled the playground I think he was our geography teacher and used to have a police whistle on the end of a long thong and his habit was whirling this thing round and if you spoke in class he used to walk up slowly and crack it right on top of your head and it really hurt until one day this boy ducked and the whistle caught the boy's ear and really ripped it and it poured blood and there was a big hoo-ha about it and he was ,well we don't know what happened to him but he didn't appear anymore. Whether they shifted him to another school or what I don't know, he just disappeared.[108]

Most of the incidents that have been described so far took place in elementary schools, many of them in rough, unreformed schools, and boys recalled all of them. Physical punishment of girls seems to have been much less common in London schools. Teachers seem to have preferred to use a mixture of sarcasm and humiliation to keep girls in order, although an examination of any girls' school punishment book will reveal plenty of instances of girls being caned, nor were girls immune to the vagaries of teachers' unofficial punishments as Elizabeth W recalled:

[107] Interview with Fred P (b.1917) p8

[108] Interview with Harry B (b.1925)

> She was a bitch when I went up she was a very tall slim woman she had this habit she would get her three fingers and she would dig you in the back if you didn't do what you were supposed to do we just didn't get on but when I went into the next class I had a lovely teacher she was a more motherly type as I said if I said a word out of place she'd dig you in the back you not done that right you not done that right nobody liked her really.[109]

Some schools, particularly those in better areas, with strong head teachers, used corporal punishment as a last resort. While a few like the Kilburn Lane Central School attended by Fred S adopted a policy dispensing with the use of the cane. Neither Humphries argument that corporal punishment was widely and indiscriminately used by teachers as a weapon in their constant battle with disruptive and often violent pupils, nor Gardner's view that teachers were reluctant to use corporal punishment, doing so only as a last resort and seeing it as a mark of their own failure, appear to paint a true picture of school life. Rather it seems that the cane and the unofficial slipper were seen simply as another tool of the teacher's trade, while both parents and children accepted corporal punishment as merely another hazard of school life.

2.8 Conclusion

It has been shown in this chapter that, despite efforts both by the officials of the Board of Education and the LCC's education committee to change the ways in which the school system was operated, with moves to reorganise the school structure and so provide a wider range of post 11+ education for London's working-class school children, the majority of children saw little change in either the type of school they attended or in the type and methods of education provided for them. This seems to have been particularly so for children from the poorest areas where both the school buildings and the methods of education seem to have changed little from those used before the Great War thus supporting DeGroot's notion that the war had little lasting impact on many aspects of society. In fact, in the immediate post Geddes era (1924-25) it might be said that the conditions worsened as classes grew to between 50 and 60 a number not seen since the turn of the century. It would seem that some teachers still favoured some children over others based on the apparent prosperity of their families. While the system, with its fee paying secondary grammar schools and scholarships, was completely inequitable, with children from the poorest backgrounds disadvantaged on several levels; not least, the fact that those attending the poorest schools were not even given the

[109] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925)

opportunity to take the examination in the first place! Those that were able to take and pass the scholarship exam had to rely upon the good will of their parents, or other relatives, to allow them to take up the opportunities offered. It was not to be until after the Second World War when the provisions of the 'Butler Education Act' came into force that this system was finally swept away.

Chapter Three
The Health of the Child

So far this work has assumed that London's children were fit and healthy but what happened when they were not? This chapter will seek to explore children's medical provision in the capital. It is not the intention to look at the provision of facilities for the disabled or for those who were subjected to deliberate neglect or abuse, or to study the provision of residential care, but rather to examine what services were available for the welfare of needy children within their own families and communities.

To do this we begin by looking at the School Care Committees system that had been established at the beginning of the century to co-ordinate the supply of meals to the capital's poorest and most needy children. It will be shown how the role of these committees grew, so that by the start of the inter-war period they were, in effect, a fully-fledged children's welfare service, covering everything from feeding and the provision of clothing and footwear, to dealing with cases of neglect and juvenile delinquency. The chapter will go on to show how, because they were staffed almost exclusively by middle-class women volunteers, the committee system suffered as the role of such women changed and the principle of volunteerism declined.

The chapter will go on to look at the work of the School Medical Service. It will examine the development and changing structure of the service during the inter-war period, and consider what effects the economic difficulties of the time had on the supply of medical services for London's school population. Using official records, the relationship between the London County Council (LCC) and the voluntary hospitals that provided treatment for school children, under the school medical scheme, will be explored. It will go on to ask what other medical provisions were available to working-class children outside the confines of the school system and it will be shown that, in the days before a free health service, poor parents would rely on cheap patent medicines and folk remedies to treat their children, consulting a doctor only as a last resort.

The fight against dirt and infestation, and the campaign to improve personal hygiene, which was led by the School Nursing Service, will then be considered in a case study.

The chapter will go on to look at the development and work of the School Meals Service, showing how it grew from its original aim of providing cheap, nutritious, charitable meals for the most needy, into a fee-paying catering service. As part of this section the campaign to encourage children to drink more milk will be examined, showing why it was believed that the consumption of milk could be used to boost the health of the nation's children and, in some instances, how so-called milk meals, sometimes supplemented with cod liver oil and or malt, were used in place of, or in addition to, the provision of regular meals for needy children.

Finally probably the most contentious issue of the period in relation to children's health, namely the debate surrounding the prevalence of malnutrition will be discussed. It will be shown how, despite all of the evidence to the contrary, it was politically untenable for the Government to admit that there was a problem with the nutrition of the nation's poorest children. It will be shown how this attitude affected the provision of both meals and milk for London's school children and consequently their general health.

As with other chapters of this work, both oral and written testimony will be used to show how attitudes towards the care and treatment of children's illnesses changed during the inter-war years, and to what extent changes in social attitudes generally affected the care and treatment of sick and needy children in the capital between the wars.

3.1 Children's Care Committee

The Children's Care Committee had its origins in the feeding provisions established by the head teachers and staff of some of the capital's poorest schools in the 1880s.These provisions were often made at the teachers' own expense because they recognized that it was impossible to teach a group of hungry children. By the end of the 1880s there were six major and numerous smaller organizations supplying meals to London's poorest children, with many also providing clothing and footwear. The aim of these organizations was simply to feed hungry children. Even so it was estimated that these charitable bodies fed less than half the children who were undernourished.[1]

[1] A Susan Williams, Patrick Ivin & Caroline Morse, *The Children of London: Attendance and Welfare at School 1870-1990* (London 2001) pp 39-41

Miss. Margaret Frere (1865-1961), a manager at Great Tower Street school in the notorious Seven Dials district, recognized that it was not enough to feed the ragged and hungry children of her school, but that she needed to discover why they were in this state. So, in the winter of 1898, accompanied by another woman manager, she set out to visit the homes of some of the poorest pupils. What they found led them to conclude that it was 'Only by getting to know and helping the parents could the suffering of the children be relieved.' [2]

Hence, in January 1899, the managers and teachers of Miss Frere's school established a 'Charitable Fund Committee', aiming to concern themselves with all aspects of child welfare. Committee members would visit families in connection with applications for clothing and boots, feeding and physical defects like the need for spectacles even visiting when a child was about to leave school and start work to ensure that he or she had a suitable job to go to. The name of the committee was changed in 1902, firstly to the 'Children's Relief Committee', and then to the 'Children's Care Committee.' In 1904, when responsibility for London's schools was transferred from the School Board of London to the London County Council, all of the voluntary feeding committees were brought together under the banner of the Joint Committee on Underfed Children. Miss Frere's committee was absorbed like the rest, but it was soon recognized as a model system because it was well organized and structured, keeping proper records which were sadly lacking in most other groups. So successful was Miss Frere's Committee that in 1907, when the council established a committee to oversee the provision of food to necessitous children in response to the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act, they adopted the name and structure of Miss Frere's Children's Care Committee.[3]

By 1909 it had become clear to the Education Committee that it could no longer rely on the voluntary provision of school meals, and it recognized the need for a more formal structure to ensure their provision. Not wanting to discourage the spirit of volunteerism, the executive officer of the authority Sir Robert Blair, conceived a scheme

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[2] Ibid p41

[3] Ibid pp 41-43

that would bring the voluntary sector into association with the public, and so prevent competition between them. Thus was born the system of School Care Committees.

The structure that developed was a three-layer pyramid, with a Central Care Committee formed as a sub-committee of the council's Education Committee. Below this there were twelve Associations of Care Committees, one for each educational division, which were supposed to raise funds, act as a link between charitable organizations and the schools and supervise the work of individual School Care Committees.

Central Care
Committee

12 Local Associations of
Care Committees

Approximately 900 School Care Committees

All of London's elementary schools were supposed to have a care committee, but the structure of the committee depended on the type of school: Was it provided or non-provided? Was it an ordinary elementary school, or a central school? In provided elementary schools, although there was no set number of committee members, the representative proportions were firmly set out. Thus two thirds of the members were representatives of the Borough Council and one third were nominated by the LCC. The numbers of members of the care committees of the non-provided schools were, on the other hand, firmly set. Each committee was composed of one representative from the local Borough, one from the LCC, and four from the foundation that provided the school. These last four normally included the parish priest or local vicar and the three senior members of the schools' staff.

As central schools were also classed as elementary, they too had care committees; but these were more elaborate, and much more prestigious, than the ordinary elementary school committees, with all members being appointed by the LCC. Ideally each committee was to include five fully elected LCC members, four drawn from the Elementary Education, and one from the Accommodation and Attendance Sub-

Committees. There were also to be two representatives from the local Borough Council; two from the local Care Committee Association, two managers from the local Continuation School, and one representative of the local Polytechnic staff. On top of this other members could be co-opted with the approval of the LCC.[4] On all care committees, at least two members were required to be women and, as will be discussed below, most committees had a majority of women members. This then was the official structure of the London School care committees but, as will be discussed shortly, these ideals were rarely met.

Although they had originally been established to supervise the provision of school meals, the care committees soon began to take on a whole range of additional tasks. As well as carrying out home visits to assess the circumstance of individual children, and determine whether they were entitled to free meals, care workers attended school medical examinations, for the purpose of providing the doctor with information on the backgrounds of the various children being examined. It would seem from oral testimony that no attempt was made to explain to the children who these women were. As Elizabeth W, who had to attend school medicals on her own because her mother worked full-time, remembered this could be quite intimidating to a young child:

> Everybody else had their mother go with them to see the doctor, but my mother was never there because she had to work. And I was frightened to death to see that doctor on my own but it was unavoidable. I had to do it. And I can see myself in my little knickers walking in that room shaking like a leaf and there would be the doctor the headmistress, and another lady and I would be petrified.[5]

After the inspection it was the task of the care worker to follow up cases to ensure that children received the treatment recommended by the doctor. Care committee workers were also responsible for providing advice to school leavers and for their aftercare once they had left school. Many committees also established links with local charities and were able to advise parents as to where they could obtain help with clothing and footwear.

The provision of clothing and footwear for needy children was something of an issue during the inter-war period for, unlike their counterparts in Scotland, Local

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[4] LMA EO/WEL/1/25 Children's care organisation and staffing 1915-1941

[5] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p10 She had previously said that her school did not have a care committee.

Education Authorities (LEA) in England and Wales had no power to provide clothing for school children. There were several campaigns during the period, including one led by Barnsley LEA, to which the LCC added its weight, calling for the 1936 Education Act to be amended to allow LEAs to provide boots and shoes to necessitous children. The campaign led to several questions being asked in Parliament. The main objections to the proposal were set out in a confidential Board of Education inter-office circular. These were that it 'would lead to a weakening of parental responsibility, and that to confer on LEAs the power to provide footwear would imply that the allowances made by the Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB) and the Public Assistance Board (PAB) were insufficient'.[6] As the circular pointed out, the government could not admit that 'the provision for the relief of poverty made by the UAB and public assistance authorities is in normal circumstances, insufficient'.[7] Thus, to protect the National Government's position on the levels of welfare benefits, poor children in England and Wales had to continue to rely on charities to provide their clothing and footwear.

The majority of care workers were volunteers drawn mostly from the middle class. They included the local clergy, who were expected to take part in good works, while many were the wives and daughters of local worthies, as care work was regarded as a suitable occupation for such women. This is apparent from an inspection of the list of members of the Battersea and Wandsworth Joint Association for the year 1920 which reveals three reverends, a deaconess and two titled ladies (the Countess Ferrers and Lady Evelyn McDonnell, a very active campaigner and worker for the welfare of London's school children), as well as some seven other women. Only two men, other than the clerics, attended these committees' meetings, and they were both representatives of the local Head Teachers Association.[8]As Williams et al point out the domination of these committees by middle-class women created problems.[9] The first of these was recruitment. This was not a problem in areas like Battersea and Putney both of which had fairly affluent middle-class populations, but in the poorest districts like Bethnal Green,

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[6] PROED 50/178 Provision of Footwear 1936-45

[7] Ibid

[8] LMA EO/WEL/3/2 those present at a meeting of the committee on 6th Feb 1920

[9] Williams et al, *The Children of London* pp 49-51

Mile End or North Kensington, finding suitable people to sit on the care committees proved difficult. So much so that, in some of the roughest districts, committees consisted only of the area organizer, or her assistant, members of the local clergy and the senior staff of the school. The second problem was that most of the women who were willing to join care committees were rather more interested in committee work than in visiting the homes of necessitous children.[10]

The volunteers who made up the bulk of the army of care workers were trained and supervised by a group of paid professional women organizers who, according to a 1934 memorandum, 'practiced their social care work second hand through the volunteers'.[11] The organizers were, by the 1930s, required to have a university degree or a diploma in social care work or to have exceptional experience in social work. This small band of professionals were required to train and supervise the approximately 6000 volunteers which a 1922 estimate considered necessary to staff the approximately 900 individual school care committees that were spread across the capital.[12]

In May 1933, as part of the inter-departmental report into Children's Care Services, Miss Nussey, the newly appointed principle organizer, provided a breakdown of the qualifications of her staff. 88 had degrees or diplomas in social work, 6 had been trained as nurses, 7 as Norland nursery nurses and 7 as sanitary inspectors, while the remaining 43 held other certificates or had special social work experience.[13]

This report provides us with a snap shot of the organisation of the Children's Care Committee system at this time. It shows, for example, that the service cost the council £56,800 in the year 1932-33, of which £50,698 had been spent on staffing. Much of this was spent on clerical support staff within the divisional offices. The report reveals just how reliant the system was on volunteers. On 3rd May 1933 there were 5,037 voluntary workers, of whom 4,349 were full members of care committees, the other 688 being approved workers. These were supported, supervised and trained by Miss Nussey's 223

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[10] Ibid pp 49-51

[11] The degrees held by the organisers were many and varied including BA's in History, English and Classics; apparently the possession of a degree was qualification enough.

[12] LMA EO/WEL/1/25 Children's care organisation staffing and duties 1915-41

[13] Five of the organisers from the medical side had been replaced by clerks to save money and there was one vacancy

paid staff. It is certain that without this army of voluntary workers the children's care committee system, and with it the whole framework of the School Welfare Service would have collapsed. This continued reliance on volunteerism in the provision of social welfare would again seem to support the arguments of historians like Gerard DeGroot that the Great War acted more as an interruption to, rather than a spur towards, social change.[14] As throughout the inter-war period children's welfare services continued to be provided, as they had been before the war, on a local voluntary basis with very little interference or control from central government.

In the early 1920s much of the work of the care committee members still revolved around the provision of free school meals and spectacles, and through the Juvenile Advisory Committees, which were normally composed of the same members as the care committee, provision of employment advice and aftercare supervision of school leavers. In poorer districts, care committee workers acted as liaison between the schools and various charitable organizations like the Children's Country Holiday Fund for which many care workers acted as local agents. Some areas of their work were declining. For example, committees were no longer informed about, or asked to provide information in cases of juvenile delinquency. Others found that Boot Clubs were no longer needed (or at least wanted) as there was no demand from the parents. St Matthew's a non-provided school in St Pancras was one such example whose Boot Club had been formed in 1915 but had closed by 1924 [15]

As part of the Hadow reorganization it was decided that, instead of a single school with Infant, Junior and Senior departments, schools should be organized into groups of 5 with an Infants a Mixed Junior, a Senior Boys' a Senior Girls' and a Central school in each group. Often these 'separate' schools would be housed in the same building but with separate staffs and head teachers. This created an unexpected problem; because each school was supposed to have its own care committee, it was found that a family could have visits from a number of different care workers as the child, or more often children, went through the school system. Instead of going from department to department within a single school unit (and a single care committee) they were now technically, if not

[14] Gerard J DeGroot, *Blighty: British Society in the Era of the Great War* (London 1996) pp 290-311

[15] LMA EO/WEL/2/17 Minutes of St Matthew's St school Care Committee 1910-1939

physically, moving from one school to another and so from one care committee to another. For this reason it was decided to group the care committees on the same lines as the schools, so that a single care worker could be responsible for all of the children in a family as they passed through the group's schools.

This reorganization, it was hoped, would also save on costs and help to alleviate the problem of the falling number of volunteers. This decline in volunteerism can be illustrated by an examination of the membership of a couple of individual Care Committees. At St Matthew's, for example, by the mid-twenties most meetings were only attended by the vicar and the school's three head teachers, while at Olga St, a council elementary school, the care committee meetings were often only attended by Miss Wood the paid assistant organizer, the head of the boys department and the head of the Infants department. Occasionally a local volunteer would attend, together with other teachers, when the senior staffs were otherwise engaged. The local vicar, the Reverend Mr. Felix, was, as seems to have been the case in most schools, elected chairman of the committee, and attended most meetings between 1921 and 1927.[16]

An examination of these Minute Books shows some remarkable similarities. In the early years the minutes of all of these committees are quite detailed, listing the names of members attending, and then giving details of the names and family circumstances of children receiving free meals and those requiring medical treatment. They even record the names of pupils who had been prosecuted by the police, noting the crime committed and the sentence. By the mid 1920s the number of members attending the meeting began to fall, and so did the detail of information recorded. In most cases the minutes are reduced to lists of the names of the children receiving free meals and spectacles .By the early 1930s, the entries have become very formulaic, simply recording that a meeting had been held listing those who had attended and recording that they had discussed the provision of meals and other matters and the date of the next meeting.

Many schools used the same book to record the minutes of the Juvenile Advisory Committee, again going from a list of the children seen, and recommendations made, in the early 1920s, to a list of those who attended and the number of children seen by the 1930s.

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[16] LMA EO/WEL/2/5 Minutes of Children's Care Committee Olga St School 1919-1927

The reorganization of care committees was, like the reorganization of schools themselves, a slow process and St Matthew's, like many other non-provided schools, still had its own Care Committee when the school was closed at the start of the Second World War.

It is interesting to look at the attitudes of the members of the Care Committee towards the children for whose welfare they were supposed to be responsible. In October 1919 the Battersea and Wandsworth Joint Association of Care Committees received a complaint which was passed to them by the Wandsworth Board of Guardians. A number of parents had complained to one of the Board's Relieving Officers about the quality and quantity of food served at the Bradshaw St Cookery Centre and about the way that necessitous children, who received their meals free of charge, were differentiated from the paying children. The committee sent one its members, a Miss Foot, to investigate.[17] She reported that 'the food was excellent and the quantity liberal', but she did find that 'the accommodation and general upkeep was not so satisfactory.'[18] Just two years later, in September 1921, however, the same committee complained to the LCC about two of the menus provided by the Alexandra Trust, the charitable organization contracted to provide school meals in the area. The menus in question consisted only of rice pudding and bread. (It must be remembered that for many children this was their main meal of the day). They also complained about a menu that included cold fish in the winter, and asked that green vegetables be provided at least twice a week. As a result of these, and complaints from other care associations, and in an attempt to save money, the council's contract with the Alexandra Trust was terminated on 30th September 1922. After this, food was supplied, either from the council's own cookery centres, or from the kitchens of its special schools. In a few places like Putney, where it was too difficult for children to get to a council run establishment, local caterers supplied food.[19]

The care committee workers dealt mainly with the so-called necessitous children namely, those from the poorest homes, children who were found to be in need of medical

[17] The centre was as was normal practice notified of the visit in advance

[18] LMA EO/WEL/3/3 Minutes of the Battersea and Wandsworth Joint Association of Care Committees it should be noted that the centre did have advance warning of Miss Foot's visit.

[19] Ibid

treatment and those who had been neglected or abused. For most children the only contact they had with the Care Committee was the strange woman who attended their three compulsory school medical inspections, and their interview with the school's Juvenile Advisory Committee that they were required to attend just before they left school.

These interviews were normally conducted in the term before the child was due to leave school. The juvenile advisory committee normally comprised the same members as the care committee and was normally convened after the care committee meeting with the addition of a member of the districts Joint Advisory Committee.[20] At Olga St, Miss. Mastin from the District Joint Advisory Committee would join the school's care committee members to form the advisory committee. The head of the girls' department would also join the committee when girls were to be interviewed. The committee would then interview the leavers, often with their mothers present.

The minutes of these meetings reveal that the committee developed the standard practice of referring the children to the district Joint Advisory Committee, which was based at the local Labour Exchange, unless the parents said that they would place the child.[21]

Thus, it would seem that throughout the inter-war period the provision of school welfare services depended mainly on the activities of a large, though diminishing, group of middle-class women volunteers who gave up their time, and often their money, to help London's needy school children.

What impact did these prototype social workers have on the lives of London's working-class children? If one were simply to rely on the written record it would seem that the efforts of these care committees must have left a lasting impression on the consciousness of thousands of Londoners, but the oral testimony casts doubt on this. Out of the 26 people asked if they remembered the school care committee only 2 replied positively; this despite the fact that all of them must have come into contact with a care worker at some time, even if only at a school medical examination, and at least 11 of

[20] This was a committee of local employers representatives of the local employment exchange and the District Care Committee set up to advise school leavers on finding suitable local employment.

[21] LMA EO/WEL/2/5 Minutes of Children's Care and Joint Advisory Committees Olga Street School 1919-1927

them could have been classified as necessitous at one time or another during their childhood.

Even those contributors who had been in receipt of free school meals, and who must inevitably have come into contact with the care committee system in some form or another failed to recall them. Why then was there this apparent discrepancy? Perhaps the children were not involved in the decision-making process and were unaware that that they and their family had been the subject of consideration by the committee. This, although possible, seems unlikely, as a committee member was supposed to visit the home of a necessitous child to assess their circumstances before awarding free meals. Another possibility is that, because most of those interviewed came from some of the capital's poorest district where the school care committee comprised mainly the senior staff of the school concerned, they did in fact come into contact with the committee but did not recognize it for what it was, a visit from a teacher not making a lasting impression. The final possibility is that, in some cases as, in the case of Elizabeth W, because their parents strove to present a respectable image to the outside world, necessitous children were overlooked.

3.2 The School Medical Service During the Inter-war Period

It is generally assumed that the School Medical Service was founded in 1907 by the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act as part of the government's drive to improve the nation's health and efficiency. This came amid concerns about the physical deterioration of the nation, which were a direct result of the fears raised about the fitness of the working classes after it was found that almost two thirds of army recruits were medically unfit for service during the Boer War. Harry Hendrick has challenged this idea in his book *Child Welfare England 1872-1989.* Hendrick points out that the London School Board had appointed its first Schools Medical Officer (SMO), Dr W.R. Smith, in 1890, and goes on to say that the origins of the service were:

> ' To be found in five sources, foreign examples, sanitation reform and public health concerns, the "over pressure" debate of the 1880s, administrative and legislative developments since the 1890's and fears of racial deterioration and urban degeneration.'[22]

[22]Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare England 1872-1989* (London 1994) p.112.

Bernard Harris supports this thesis in his 1995 book *The Health of the School Child: A History of the School Medical Service in England and Wales* which gives a detailed history of the School Medical Service right up to the early 1990s.[23]

The SMO for London from 1902 was Dr James Kerr, a pioneer in the field of child health, who had been SMO for Bradford since 1893. He recognised that many London schools had a problem with large numbers of dirty, lice ridden and chronically sick pupils, and so, in 1904, he established a system of cleansing stations attached to schools across the capital, and began conducting routine school medical inspections in 1905.[24]

By 1907, when the provision of school medical inspection was finally made compulsory, there were already inspection schemes of one sort or another being operated by 65 LEAs. After the Act, the number grew rapidly so that by 1909, 307 out of the 328 LEAs had established medical inspection schemes and by the outbreak of war in 1914, provision had been made for medical inspection by all local authorities.[25] There was little opposition to the idea of the medical inspection and, where necessary, treatment of school children. The main concern that was raised was one of cost: who was to pay? The 1907 Act had made inspection compulsory but had given LEAs only permissive powers to provide treatment. It soon became obvious that inspection without treatment was a pointless exercise, and between 1912 and 1914 the government established a system of grants to LEAs towards the costs of inspection and treatment schemes, as a means of expanding the Schools Medical Service.[26] The 1918 Education Act laid a duty on the LEAs to provide treatment for children who were found to need medical care in order to benefit from their education, and gave them powers to recover the costs where practicable from the child's parents or guardians.[27]

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[23] Bernard Harris, *The Health of the Schoolchild: a History of the School Medical Service in England and Wales* (Buckingham & Philadelphia 1995) pp 6-14

[24] Stuart Maclure, *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1970* (London 1970*)*, p. 97.

[25] Hendrick, *Child Welfare in England* p 115

[26] Bernard Harris, *The Health of the School Child* p71

[27] Stuart Maclure, *One Hundred Years of London Education 1870-1970* p.99

By 1915 London had established a system under which children were subject to a minimum of three inspections during their school careers, unless the parents objected. The first came upon entry into the school system at the age of 5, the second just after they had moved from Infants to Seniors aged about 8 and the last at about 13 just before they were due to leave, this pattern was to be perpetuated throughout the inter-war period.

By the end of the First World War, the School Medical Service in London, like the rest of the country, was in a very depleted state, many of its doctors and nurses having been called into war service.[28] This meant that many of the routine inspections had to be curtailed although some effort was made by using retired and over aged male and women doctors to conduct inspections of children on entry and where possible on leaving school.

In spite of the difficulties imposed by the war, the infra-structure of the School Medical Service in London grew and expanded between 1914 and 1918 with the establishment of treatment centres attached to local schools and an extension of agreements between the Council and local Voluntary Hospitals to provide treatment for children referred by the School Medical Service [SMS].[29]

Initially it seems that many of these Voluntary Hospitals were reluctant to see children referred to them by the school medical service and it was only after protracted negotiations that some of them agreed to provide treatment. [30] Once agreements had been reached the hospitals established separate clinics for children refereed by the SMS, for which the education authority were expected to pay. These charges included the costs of any materials or drugs used, the rental of consulting rooms and waiting areas as well as the salaries of a nurse, medical attendant (often a final year medical student), and where appropriate, the fees of an attending surgeon. In cases where children needed an operation the council were also required to pay for use of an operating theater and the services of an anesthetist.[31]

What sorts of cases were handled by the SMS ? They dealt with a range of childhood problems, in particular they were keen to treat children with ear, nose, and

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[28] All male doctors of military age were conscripted in 1917

[29] LMA PH/SHS/2/3 & LMA PH/SHS/2/4 School health service files dealing with contracts between the LCC and various hospitals for the provision of treatment for school children.

[30] Ibid.

[31] LMA PH/SHS/2/3 Correspondence between London Ophthalmic Hospital and LCC 1915-1935

throat infections, those needing spectacles, or surgery to correct vision problems, and those suffering from infectious skin disorders, like impetigo and ring worm, for which, as will be discussed below, they recommended X ray treatment![32] Through the School Dental Service they attempted to combat the problem of tooth decay. At first sight this might seem to be a rather odd combination, but not when it is understood that, in order to qualify for the government grant, the local authority had to provide details of their arrangements for medical inspections, the detection of uncleanness and the treatment of minor ailments, eyes, teeth, enlarged tonsils and adenoids.[33] Thus school medical provision might be seen as the council providing services simply to fulfill a government-funding requirement. Many education authorities, including the LCC, also provided a range of additional services, including ultraviolet or sunlight treatment for children that were suffering from rickets, scabies or ringworm. They also established a series of open-air day schools where children suffering from non-infectious tuberculosis, or other chest complaints, and those thought to be weak and in need of fresh air, could be taught under medical supervision either in the open or in open-sided sheds.[34]

For children suffering from persistent sore throats and indeed, it seems for almost all elementary school children, the School Medical Service was keen to recommend that they have a tonsillectomy: A 1925 LCC pamphlet for parents '*The School Medical Service*', said that it was better to have this minor operation early so that the child could continue his or her education uninterrupted. In fact, so keen were they for children to have this operation that, as Dorothy recalled, when one child in a family was to be operated on they encouraged the parents to have them all done:

> Years a go they used to take your tonsils out. Always taking kiddies tonsils out. They only do it now if they're in a bad way. My sister hers was infected so she had to have it done so my dad said 'let the two girls go together.' She was sleeping and I was crying. I remember being wheeled into the theatre and I thought 'oh I don't like that with the big light and everything' Then when we came home I was sick and I sicked up big bits of flesh like that[35]so that whatever they done I must have swallowed it and my mum said if any more comes up your going back to the hospital but no more didn't come up.[36]

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[32] LMA PH/SHS/2/PASSIM Treatment of children school medical service

[33] Bernard Harris, *The Health of the School Child* pp.92-93

[34] PRO ED32/145 Wandsworth Council Open Air Day School

[35] Contributor held fingers out to the size of a 2p coin

[36] Interview with Dorothy (b.1927) p12

The pamphlet also highlighted the importance of a clean handkerchief and prompt treatment for a child with a continually runny nose. It stressed that the family doctor should treat a child with earache at once as this could lead to more serious complications. The pamphlet, which was clearly written by a middle-class council official, assumes that parents had their own doctor and could afford to pay for treatment. It says that treatment centres are available but that most parents would prefer to get their child treated by the family physician.[37] It is obviously not aimed at the working-class mother who, under the financial strictures of the day, would have found it impossible to call upon the services of a doctor every time her child complained of earache or had a sniffle; it was aimed rather at the better off parent who could afford regular medical care.

As mentioned above, the medical service provided X-ray treatment for children suffering from ringworm of the scalp. This rather radical treatment, which often resulted in temporary baldness, was preferred to the other methods of treatment. These included the use of thallium, a heavy metal poison, but it was argued that X-ray treatment was by far the safest method which, when provided correctly, produced no visible side effects apart from temporary baldness, whereas thallium treatment could cause nausea and vomiting,[38]

In order for children to receive treatment through the School Medical Service they first had to be referred by a school doctor, and as school medical inspections were only routinely carried out 3 times during a child's school career this usually required a special examination. This was normally instigated either when the school nurse discovered a problem during one of her periodic Personal Hygiene Inspections or when a teacher spotted something wrong with a child and reported it. In either case the school doctor was then required to conduct a special medical examination to determine whether the child needed medical treatment so that he or she could continue to benefit from their education.

By the year 1929-30 nationally the number of special and repeat examinations had reached almost 3,000,000 a year and were accounting for 62% of the time SMOs spent on

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[37] LMA LCC/PH/Gen/3/11 The School Medical Service (LCC 1925)

[38] J.M.W. Macleod , 'Ringworm and its Treatment', *British Medical Journal,* 23-4-1928, pp.656-659

inspections.[39] In London almost 70% of the SMOs inspection time was taken up with special and repeat examinations.[40] Many of the contributors reported that the doctor was a regular visitor to their school while some said that they saw they school doctor every four to six weeks.[41]

Even if a child was referred to a local hospital or treatment centre there was still no guarantee that he or she would receive treatment. Firstly the parents had to be persuaded to take the child. Many working class parents saw the school treatment centres as places of charity and believed that they provided second-rate treatment. This impression was not helped by the location and physical condition of many of the centres. As Fred S recalls they were often uninviting and even dirty places to visit:

> It was the pits not a bit healthy and hygienic, I know it was a place on the corner of the street and you just go inside there and you sit. Really terrible place waiting to go in and when you go in. I can't really, It didn't strike me as being a hospital it wasn't really a very nice place.[42]

It would seem that it was not just the physical surroundings that were unhygienic but that some members of staff were very lax in the way that they dealt with their young patients:

> I had to have drops cos I had a touch of conjunctivitis and they sent me to the school clinic for the nurse to put them in and she used her finger I went home and told me mum and she said 'right you don't go there anymore I'll do it me self.'[43]

Some parents were so distrusting of the School Medical Service that like Harry B's parents they refused to allow their children to be seen at all by the school doctor:

> I can never remember being examined by the school doctor at all...I remember her saying she didn't want me to be attended by them cause she didn't know who was going to get hold of me She said if we are going to do anything we'll do it through our local doctor.[44]

Under normal circumstances there was no legal obligation for parents to allow their children to be seen, let alone treated, by the school doctor. In fact parents had to sign

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[39] PRO ED50/175 Special services general file

[40] LMA LCC/PH/SHS/2/PASSIM Treatment of children school medical service

[41] This is quite possible especially if the child was thought to be sickly or in need of milk or supplements like Cod liver oil or Malt as the Doctor had to authorise their provision.

[42] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) p12

[43] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p11

[44] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p14

a consent form before a child could be examined. [45] So, as mentioned above, much of the children's care committee worker's time was taken up with persuading parents to allow their children to be treated and ensuring that children received the medical treatment the school doctor had recommended, even, in some cases, going so far as to take the child to the treatment centre themselves.

If the physical conditions of the treatment centres were poor it would seem that this was reflected in the attitude of the staff to the children who, like Irene, were often treated quite harshly by members of this under-appreciated service:

> I was always falling over, dead awkward on me feet, and I used to get big bad knees and elbows and you'd go to the clinic and they'd do them up but they never put ointment on them. They used to put like a hot lint over your knee and I used to dread to go because they went instead of just easing it off they used to pull it off. And that wasn't very nice. They used to just get hold of it and just rip it off. Course your leg used to bleed again and then they'd put another one on. I didn't like that. I said to mum and dad I wouldn't go anymore and I'd let my dad or my mum do it for me they used to soak t with water the lint but not in these clinics they didn't they just used to rip it off yer.... I don't know they didn't seem to have any compassion. You was a child and that was it. You used to have to have this done and that done. Used to hear them crying and screaming in the other room when you was sitting waiting to go in. Oh it used to be horrible.[46]

When a child was taken to the school clinic treatment was not free; a scale of charges was enforced [see Table 3.1] and often collected by the school attendance officers.

Table 3.1 LCC School Medical Service scale of charges for medical treatment at treatment centres and participating hospitals May 1933

Minor ailments	
After a fortnights free treatment..........................	1s*
Teeth	
Slight treatment..	1s
Normal treatment not requiring gas......................	2s
Extensive treatment (such as an extraction using gas)...	3s
Ear and Throat	
Operation for enlarged tonsils............................	5s
Other Treatment...	2s

*1s covered treatment for 6 months after which another 1s fee was charged

[45] PROED50 /175 Special services

[46] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p14

Taken from EO/WEL/1/3 Inter Departmental Report into Children's Care Services 3rd May 1933

Although many of these charges, especially for tonsil and adenoid operations, were waived or reduced by the care committees, many families still had to pay. In 1933, for example, it was estimated that out of the 330,000 cases seen in the previous year some 165,000 had paid the full fees.[47]

One area in which the school treatment centres were very active was in the field of dentistry. The School Dental Service had been established in 1908 to work in conjunction with the medical service as a response to the vast amount of tooth decay found amongst working-class children in the elementary schools.[48] The main cause of this was the children's diet, which was often deficient in calcium as milk and eggs were expensive, but included large amounts of sugars. A cheap and popular snack for a hungry child was a piece of bread smeared with jam or simply with sugar.[49] The School Dental Service waged a continual war both against under-funding and lack of staff and against parental indifference. From the oral testimony it would seem that a trip to the school dentist was not something to look forward to. So unpleasant was it that in some cases children were traumatized for life by their experiences at the hands of the school dentist:

> I had to go once when I was about 11 to have a tooth out at the back. And apparently my teeth have extra long roots on them, and I was sitting in the chair I remember, and wriggling about cos he was getting hold of it, and snapping off and breaking off and cracking. And all the time I was fidgeting about here and there and everywhere, and all at once he actually climbed on the chair and he had feet either side of me and he stood over the top and he said 'now keep still otherwise I'll pull your bloody head off' and from that day on I was dead scared of dentists.[50]

Many parents and dentists seemed to believe that treating younger children was a waste of time. What was the point, they asked, in wasting money treating baby teeth that were only going to fall out anyway? One dentist waged an almost continuous war in the medical press against the practice of repeatedly filling deciduous (baby) teeth, arguing that children could eat just as well without their baby teeth as they could with them, and

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[47] LMA EO/WEL/1/3 Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Children's Care Services

[48] Bernard Harris, *The Heath of the School Child* p194.

[49] See chapter one: most contributors recalled with fondness eating either bread and jam, or bread smeared with sugar as well as the ubiquitous bread and dripping

[50] Interview with Peter (b.1924) p9

that the risk of infection far outweighed the benefits of filling already badly decayed teeth.[51]

A visit to the school dentist in the 1920s could be a truly horrific experience for younger children, because it was still widely believed that baby teeth did not contain nerves and so both fillings and extractions were routinely conducted without anesthetic![52]It is then perhaps little wonder that so many older people have a genuine dread of visiting the dentist.

3.3 Other Medical Provision

What was the state of medical provision for the ordinary working-class child outside the Schools Medical System? Concerns about the high levels of infant mortality had led to improvements in maternity and infant care with the rise of the health visitors and mother and baby clinics. For children between 5 and 16 there was no provision of primary health care outside the school system. Hence for most working-class adolescents who left school at 14, there was no provision at all, until they reached sixteen and were covered by the National Employed Workers Health Insurance Scheme. It was not until 1934 that the age limit was lowered and the scheme extended to cover most groups of workers,[53] Even after this date, although the National Employed Workers Health Insurance Scheme now covered most workers over the age of 14, the dependants of insured workers were still not covered. Thus, while an employed father might freely go to the local 'panel doctor' if he were sick, he was expected to pay for the treatment of his wife and children. It was often thought at the time that there was no need for further state- funded medical provision for working-class children; surely the School Medical Service, that cost the ratepayers so much, must be sufficient for the children of the labouring classes?

In fact this was far from the truth. Both the 1918 and 1921 Education Acts specifically prohibited School Medical Officers (SMOs) from providing domiciliary treatment; the only places at which SMOs could provide treatment for their young charges were either in the schools or at school treatment centres which, as we have seen,

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[51] Anon 'Dental Sepses in Children' *The Lancet* 7-2-1920 p303

[52] Interview with Mrs B Jones FRCDS interviewed at her surgery

[53] Some categories of workers, civil and public servants, agricultural workers and domestic servants were still excluded from the provisions of the scheme.

were often crowded, busy, unpleasant places to which many working-class parents were reluctant to send their children. Furthermore the doctors and nurses who worked at these centres were under considerable pressure to limit both the time they spent with and the treatment they provided for each individual child.

As mentioned above, the School Medical Service did not deal with all childhood maladies but rather a limited range of specific and minor complaints. A child who was taken seriously ill had to rely upon either the private sector or charitable donations for his or her care. For children of the unemployed or those receiving public assistance there were the public assistance doctors and hospitals but, before a child could be seen at one of these institutions, the mother had first to go to the relieving officer to get a chit guaranteeing that the hospital or doctor would be paid for treating the child under the public assistance regulations.[54]

Marion, whose father was a day labourer at the docks, clearly recalled the card needed to see the 'panel doctor':

> You had your doctor, your ordinary doctor, the panel doctor sort of thing ...You got a card didn't you. You had a sort of medical card more or less like now. You'd go there and they'd papers but it was a little brown card you.[55]

If a child became ill at home it was normal to try to treat him or her with patent medicines and home remedies before calling in the doctor. The old nursery rhyme treatment of using vinegar and brown paper to treat a headache or smearing a child with goose fat as a cold cure were still prevalent[56] Most streets had somebody like Margaret N's grandmother to whom they would turn when a child was taken ill:

> My Nan was always one that if you went to her you'd say 'oh Nan I've got tum ache' or 'I've got ear ache' Nanny always had some kind of thing to make it go away. There was always something. I mean my Nan used to do lots of herbs and stuff like that and she'd always say 'sit down'. And she could always find something that would ease that pain, whatever it was and I suppose more than the herbs it was the comfort that she gave to everybody.[57]

The doctor would only be called upon as a last resort when all else had failed.

In the case of a serious illness or accident a child might be taken to one of the great teaching hospitals like Guy's, St Thomas's, University College and the London, all

[54] Bernard Harris, *The Health of the School Child* p78

[55] Interview with Marion (b.1923) p12.

[56] Interview with Ernest G (b.1927) p

[57] Interview with Margaret N (b. c1930) p3

of which held public clinics where the working classes could receive cheap or free treatment depending on income, in return for offering themselves as guinea pigs for the medical students to practice their diagnostic skills upon. Many people recalled receiving medical care at these hospitals after accidents both in the home and in the streets. In cases of infectious diseases, like scarlet fever or diphtheria, which despite vaccination were still prevalent, a child would be taken to a local authority funded Isolation Hospital.

This too could be a traumatic event in a child's life as Harry B remembers when he got 'the scarlet measles' [sic]. He was carried screaming down the four floors of the house his family shared in Camden Town, North London by two men to a waiting ambulance, to be taken to Hampstead General Hospital where he spent five weeks in isolation.[58]

While the children of the middle classes would be admitted to one of the private or voluntary hospitals around the capital, most children from working-class areas would normally go to either one of the teaching hospitals or, more often than not, to one of the old Poor Law hospitals. The procedures on arrival at such a hospital seem almost to have been designed to frighten and humiliate a sick child. On admission a child would be stripped of his or her clothing, and if the child had an infectious disease, any possessions would be taken away and sterilized or in some instances destroyed. The child would then be prepared for the ward. This often meant that he or she would be given a hot bath and his or her hair treated for lice. This was, of course, a particularly humiliating experience for girls who had long hair, and for those children who came from clean homes, all of whom knew about the nit nurse and what happened to dirty children. Once in the ward the hospital could be a frightening place, with strict discipline as Elizabeth W recalled:

> I went to the Hackney hospital, Dalston it was called then. I can even remember that it was the first time I ever had a bit of jewellery. My aunt bought me a little heart ring with a stone in it. It went on my little finger and when I got into hospital they took it away from me and I never got it back. As I say, I had this long hair and my mum used to put bows of ribbon when she could get them and they took that away. And I had to share things and I can even remember that I was put in a bed cot near the exit doors where they had the iron steps going down and now I know it was what we would call a ward maid and she used to hang her dusters over this railing outside and if the wind blew them down she'd swear I used to think it was my fault. I used to be frightened when she came in, in the morning if her dusters had fallen down I used to hide.[59]

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[58] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p13

[59] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p10

Emily, who spent a lot of her time in hospital between the ages of 7 and 15, recalled that children were generally confined to their beds while visits were restricted to an hour on Sundays:

> As a child you got memories of it (hospital) being clean. And you got to lay still you mustn't muck the bed up, sort of thing. And you got fed three times a day, and they used to come round and take your temperature, and put a pot under you cos you couldn't get out of bed and they'd give you a blanket bath in bed …and lights out and you only had visiting once a week on a Sunday for an hour.[60]

If a child was sent to an isolation hospital he or she would not even be allowed this weekly visit. Only in exceptional circumstances were parents allowed to see their children, and even then they were only allowed to view them through a window or from the door of the ward:

> I went into Poplar hospital when I was seven and they put me in the ladies ward… and they came and took a swab and stuck needles in me and the next day they took me to the Brook Hospital Shooters Hill.[61] Diphtheria I'd caught diphtheria and the first thing I remember they injected me in the stomach and I couldn't see me mum. They wasn't allowed to come and I was there about three months, Because I was fretting and they let me mum come to see me and she stood at the ward door with a gown and everything.[62]

When a child was eventually released from an isolation hospital, any toys or presents the child had received had to be left behind on the ward for fear of spreading infection, as Harry B recalled:

> I got some wonderful toys while I was in there given to me by relatives but unfortunately, because it was a contagious ward, no one was allowed to bring them out so all my lovely toys I left behind.[63]

Once the child was judged to be recovering he or she might be allowed up, and even taken out into the hospital grounds for some fresh air, but as Elizabeth W recalled, even this process could be humiliating:[64]

> I was four and a half to five and I can even remember when you got well enough to get on your feet you don't have your own clothes they loaned you clothes to wear. I remember they gave me a pair of boots, *boy's boots* just to go down in the grounds.[65]

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[60] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p11

[61] The Brook Hospital was an LCC isolation hospital in Shooters Hill South East London this was quite a distance from the East End from where many of its young patients seem to have come.

[62] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p11

[63] Interview with Harry B (b.1927) p13

[64] I think that it is important to point out that these procedures were not in themselves meant to humiliate the children involved but rather were the result of bureaucratic indifference on the part of the hospital staff.

Many children on release from a period of hospital care found themselves packed off to convalescent homes in the country, as it was often felt that they needed a period of good food and fresh air to speed up their recovery before they were returned to the dingy back streets of the capital's working-class districts. The LCC ran several Convalescent Camp Schools, as they were known, most notably the King's Canadian School for boys at Bushey in Hertfordshire. The council also sent some London school children to homes provided by charitable bodies as can be seen from Table 3.2 below

Table No:3.2 Number of London Children sent to convalescent camp schools 1932

Provided		Boys	Girls
King's Canadian School Bushey		2770	-
George Rainey	St Leonard's		621
Wansted House Margate			535
Total		2770	1156
Non-Provided			
Fairfield House Broadstairs			209
Russell Lotes School Bournemouth			239
St Mary's Dover			31
Loughton		25	49
Total		25	528

Taken from LMA EO/SHS/1/22 Statistics for annual report 1933

Some parents preferred to send their children to private convalescent homes or homes related to their own religion; thus Bernard Kops recalled in his autobiography being sent to a Jewish convalescent home after a bout of pneumonia in the 1930s.[66]

It would seem from autobiographies that many children found their time in these homes more stressful than their original illness, children who had been dry at night for years suddenly began to wet the bed again. This, in turn, could often lead to further stress and humiliation as they were forced to parade their wet sheets each morning.[67] But even

[65] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p11

[66] Bernard Kops, *The World is a Weeding* (London 1970) Se also Louis Heren, *Growing up Poor in London* (London 1973)

[67] Ibid.

if recommended, a stay in a convalescent home was not guaranteed, because, like everything else, parents were expected to pay for the privilege of sending their children away, even to council-run convalescent schools. The care committee was often required to assess how much each family was required to pay.[68]

Even in convalescent homes children were still expected to abide by the strict rules, and discipline was often sharp and painful, as Dusty, who spent time at a home in Dartford Kent, recalled:

> I was taken to hospital then and finished up down in Dartford somewhere...I was called Dusty and the boy next to me was called Rusty and while we was in that hospital we palled up and became the terrible twins. I think got up to a lot of mischief. We would get slapped and slung back in bed. It wasn't much, it was just we made a lot of noise in wrong areas. We never actually done anything wrong.[69]

Of course not everybody found their time at a convalescent home unpleasant. Some children found it a blessed relief to be away from their often overcrowded homes. Some became regular visitors, treating their time in hospital and convalescence as a holiday.

In some of the poorest districts free clinics and dispensaries where doctors worked for a nominal fee (3d or 6d) to provide some medical care for the poor, were still in existence. Arthur Newton recalled one eccentric known as Dr Jelly who worked in the poor district of South Hackney:

> He always wore a frock-coat and sometimes a hat. He practiced medicine and despite his personal condition and behavior, many there were who had the greatest faith in his ability....A visit at home from him would cost I think 3d. A bottle of medicine, 1d or 2d, and a penny for any boy who minded his horse. Over the years he had many addresses and as time went on his mode of transport became more up to date. He departed from the local scene at the beginning of war number two and was never seen again...[70]

For the majority of London's working-class population, a visit to the doctor with a sick child would cost them anything from a 1/- to the not inconsiderable sum of 2/6d plus medicines while to call the doctor out would cost between 5/- and 10/-, a prohibitively high amount when the average wage was only about 70/- a week. (See appendix 3)

Many working class families contributed toward private health insurance schemes like the Hospital Savings Association or the Hospital Saturday Fund, and others

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[68] LMA EO/DIV3/MOR/MISC/1 Minutes of Moreland Street Care Committee

[69] Interview with Dusty (b 19290 p11

[70] Arthur Newton *Years of Change: Autobiography of a Hackney Shoemaker* (London 1974) pp40-41

contributed to church or workplace schemes like the Post Office Sanatorium Society, which provided care for both the employee and his family. But, even if you were insured, one still had to find the money to pay the doctor in the first place and then claim it back later. Thus, even in insured households, it was only in the direst emergency, and often only after other treatments had failed, that a doctor outside the confines of school would see a working-class child. This could lead to complications and reduce a child's chances of survival. In an age before antibiotics it was often difficult, if not impossible, to treat infections that would be cleared up today with a simple course of drugs. Every year common childhood maladies which in Britain today are generally prevented by vaccination, like mumps, whooping cough and measles would take their toll of London's young population, as can be seen from Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Number of Deaths in the County of London 1925-35

	MEASLES			WHOOPING COUGH			DIPHTHERIA		
Year	>1	1-5	5-15	>1	1-5	5-15	>1	1-5	5-15
1925	224	647	038	102	126	004	028	284	210
1926	046	122	008	226	303	017	021	191	152
1927	285	966	103	172	202	022	037	207	125
1928	042	142	010	431	666	043	030	151	138
1929	222	751	058	063	062	006	031	231	179
1930	029	080	005	141	160	006	021	127	097
1931	152	609	057	161	177	010	018	152	132
1932	016	072	013	139	174	016	012	151	191
1933	148	635	064	107	170	015	013	219	228
1934	004	013	002	099	062	005	008	117	134
1935	132	407	038	141	126	010	008	101	102

Compiled from LCC Published statistics 1926-1936

There were regular epidemics like the measles outbreak of 1927 when 5,533 cases were reported in London elementary schools during the Michaelmas term alone, and which went on to claim 1,354 lives across the county.[71] The whooping cough epidemic of the following year claimed 1,140 lives. Even in years like 1934 when no epidemic swept through the city lives were still regularly lost to these diseases, which are comparatively rare today.

[71] LMA PH/SHS/1/33 Summary of prevalence of diseases in elementary schools Michaelmas term 1927

3.4 The Fight for Improved Personal Hygiene and the Coming OF 'Nitty Nora'

In 1918 there was still a very real hygiene problem in London's schools, with 465,608 out of a population of 1,921,762 (24.2%) elementary school children being found to be verminous during nurses inspections.[72]

There were some marked discrepancies in the treatment of children attending ordinary elementary, central and secondary schools for, while the pupils of central schools (which were classed as elementary) were subjected to regular visits from the school nurse, those attending secondary schools, including the council's own county secondary schools, were immune from these periodic visits. Even after the 1918 Education Act gave LEAs the power to carry out medical and hygiene inspections in secondary schools, the LCC chose not to subject secondary school pupils to hygiene inspections. Why did the council exempt children attending secondary schools from regular hygiene inspections? It was probably a class issue. As most of the children attending secondary schools came from middle or upper working-class homes, it was assumed that they were clean and free from nits, lice and other parasites.

There were also differences in the treatment of those attending ordinary elementary and central schools, where there was a marked gender difference in the likelihood of being inspected. In 1918 again, for example, while the school nurses inspected 16,603 central schoolgirls, only 397 boys were subjected to examination.[73] Why was this? It was generally accepted that because of their long hair girls, even though they tended to wash their hair more often, were also more likely to have nits and head lice than boys and so when, as in 1918, there was a shortage of school nurses it was more important to subject girls to regular inspections than boys.

The periodic visits of the school nurse, or as she was dubbed by school children 'Nitty Nora the bug explorer', could often be a cause of fear, embarrassment and

[72] LMA PH/SHS/1/20 School health service statistics for annual report 1918-19

[73] Ibid.

humiliation for the children who were found to be dirty or, more often, infested with head lice. In London each nurse was appointed to be responsible for between 7 and 15 schools depending on the area.[74] The procedure for an inspection was laid down in the instructions to school nurses. In many areas they seem almost to have been designed to denigrate and humiliate the infested child, with such children being separated from the rest of the class and made to sit in a group on their own. In some areas children found to be infested were taken to the local cleansing station where they were stripped, bathed and had their heads shaved, consequently, when free of infestation they were marked out in the playground.

The problems of overcrowding and bad housing often meant that it was the same children who were found to be dirty over and over again. These children would be ostracized by their friends, often on the orders of their parents, with dire threats as to what would happen to them if they were seen in the company of a classmate who had been labeled as dirty by their community In her autobiography, Phyllis Willmott recalls the shame and humiliation she felt, as well as the shocked reaction of her mother, when she was sent home from school after an inspection with a note to say that she had been found to have head lice.[75] But this was not always the reaction. Ernest G remembered his cousin coming home crying from school after the nurse's visit, because everybody else in his class had received a letter and he had not![76] Some parents did not take the notification of infestation lying down. Phyllis Willmott's mother visited the school the next day to 'demand a recount'. It was then discovered that a mistake had been made and another girl also named Phyllis should have received the notice. One mother wrote to the Education Officer to complain that the school nurse was 'picking on' her daughters, as they had been sent home with notes on three separate occasions. The Education Officer replied that the inspections had been carried as part of routine visits, and that a different nurse had conducted each one. He went on to say that, as the girls had been absent after each inspection, a follow up examination had not been carried out. He pointed out that

[74] LMA EO/WEL/1/8 Verminous

[75] Phylis Willmott, *Growing up in a London Village* (London 1979) pp113-128

[76] Interview With Ernest G (b.1927)

inspections were conducted for the benefit of the children, and hinted that the mother had been lucky to get away without treating the girls for so long.[77]

In other areas the occasional infestation with head lice or other parasites was viewed as just another one of the hazards of childhood, as Amy recalled in her school at the end of the First World War:

> Everybody was lousy, and because I had yellow hair they could see them walking. My mother said. 'you've been sitting next to a black girl', black haired girl. I said 'yes'. She could see them... Oh I did have nits, all the kids did, you couldn't stop it. Nowadays it's not heard of. She could see it on my hair but she couldn't do much about it. She had a fine comb and it pulled, my head was sore time she was finished with it. So she used to wash it with this Sasafrin what ever it was called[78] it used to stink awful used to smell awful.[79]

In London, as in other towns between the wars, the official procedure was not supposed to be as embarrassing as it had been in the past. The school nurse was instructed to give any child found to be dirty a white card in a sealed envelope which informed the parents that their child had been found to be infested or dirty (there was an option to cross out whichever did not apply). The notice gave instructions to the parent on how to wash the hair, first with paraffin, and then with a mixture of borax and soft soap. The nurse would then revisit the school and repeat the inspection of the 'dirty' children. Those found still to be infested were issued with a red card statutory notice, which was delivered to their home by an attendance officer, telling the parent where and when to take the child to be cleansed. This was supposed to be within 24 hours of receipt of the notice. After the inspection the nurse would pass on to the cleansing station the names of the children who had been issued with a red card and arrange the appointments. Meanwhile the child was made to sit separately (according to the instructions, in the centre of the class) thus marking them out from their classmates:[80]

> They [The children with nits] was sat separate until they was, like had their hair washed in this awful smelly stuff. It was like lavender colour. You was sort of ostracized you was told to stay away from her she's got them.[81]

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[77] LMA PH/SHS/2/1-2 Treatment of children School Medical Service

[78] Sassafras oil

[79] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p14

[80] LMA LCC/PH/GEN/2/8 Lice

[81] Interview with Elizabeth W (b.1925) p10

After the cleansing was supposed to have been completed, the nurse visited the school for a third time and repeated the inspection, this time accompanied by an attendance officer. Any child that was still found to be verminous was taken by ambulance to the nearest cleansing station to be compulsorily cleaned. In these cases the Health Inspector would also be notified and the home visited and all of the occupants and the property compulsorily cleaned. If a child was again found to be verminous after he or she had been compulsorily cleaned, then he or she could be excluded from school and the parents prosecuted under the attendance bye-laws.[82]

So that was what was supposed to happen but, it would seem from the oral testimony, that this procedure was rarely followed in practice. It appears that the procedure for dealing with infested children varied from district to district and even from school to school. Thus Ernie, who lived in the Paddington district, recalled that when he was found to have nits the official procedure was completely bypassed:

> I remember once we had someone come round looking for nit and I had this nit. I didn't know I had them, but I had these nits and they sent me to a place where they give you some thick cream like toffee on your head and wash it all off and all that and then when I told my dad he was most annoyed because they done this without telling him. That was what they wanted because he didn't think I had nits or fleas or whatever it was. I just made up the number up at the time. I was there or something like that, I don't know, I don't know, if that holds any truth, but I did go to one of those places where they give a fine comb and comb it out and give you the wash and and everything... they take you from school yeah taken from school. It wasn't very far away the place. It was called the tin school and it was in Burn Terrace, it was called the tin school, but it wasn't a school as such it was just a corrugated a couple of hut that was just used for that particular purpose nothing more.[83]

In Bethnal Green the names of children found to be dirty would be recorded in a book and the children then sent to the cleansing station.[84] While Irene recalled that the cleansing station was attached to her school in Canning Town:

> They used to look in your hair. They used to come round and examine you then they used to examine your hair and if the kids had anything luckily I never did, but if the kids had anything the used put something on their hair. I don't know what it was and wash their hair and they used to put this like a turban on their heads and you always knew if you see a child with turban on its head boy or girl you knew they been to see what we used to call the Flea Doctor the Flea Nurse.[85]

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[82] LMA LCC/PH/SHS/3 Cleansing of Verminous Children

[83] Interview with Ernie (b.1928) p7

[84] Interview with Marion (b.1923) p11. It is interesting to note that the Bethnal Green cleansing station was opposite Russia Lane School. The site is now occupied by the Russia Lane Day Care Centre where some of the contributors to this study were interviewed.

[85] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p13

One effect of having the cleansing station so close by was that the personal hygiene of the children at Irene's school could be closely monitored, and improved by forcing them to take regular supervised showers:

> We used to go to these baths once a week, and we had to walk through these showers, a hot one first then a cold one. That was in school. Boys used to go one week and the girls used to go next week. one day because we had to strip as children and walk through these showers and wash ourselves, and there was always a nurse watching us, then we used to have a warm shower, or a hot shower then we used to have to run back through the other shower, and it was cold, just to then we put our clothes on when we'd dried our self used to like that. That the only time I had a shower otherwise it was a tin bath in front of the fire[86]

What happened at the Cleansing Station? On arrival at the cleansing centre the child would be inspected by one of the resident nurses using a fine toothcomb soaked in Lysol.[87] If the child had been brought to the centre voluntarily, and no other signs of infestation were detected the child would have their hair washed with paraffin and then a mixture of Borax and soft soap, the whole procedure taking about half an hour after which they were free to go. If, on the other hand, the cleansing was compulsory, or other infestations were discovered, then the child would be taken to a bathroom and stripped. His or her clothes would be taken to an autoclave for sterilisation while the child was bathed in a disinfectant. The hair would be washed in the usual way, first in paraffin and then with a mixture of borax and soft soap to kill any lice. In cases of serious infestation, or when ringworm or impetigo was found, the hair would be cut short. In the worst cases, and especially for boys, the head might be shaved (this was done routinely when a child was to be treated for ring worm using X-rays, as the hair would fall out anyway after treatment).

There was considerable debate at the time as to whether or not the authorities had the right to cut children's hair. Before the war it had been normal practice to crop the heads of all children coming to the centres with head lice.[88] After 1918 it became council policy not to cut children's hair without their parents' consent, except in the worst cases

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[86] Ibid

[87] A proprietary phenolic disinfectant popular at the time

[88] This practice had been introduced after the council lost a case at the Bow street police court in 1910 when the magistrate ruled that the parents of a child who had been found to be repeatedly dirty were not guilty of any offence because the council nurses had not properly cleansed the child because they had not cut his hair to remove nits.

where it was felt to be impossible to clean the hair in any other way.[89] Once clean, the child would be given a dressing gown and told to wait until his or her clothes were ready. If the clothes were found to be beyond saving, then the centres kept a supply of replacements. Once the child and his or her clothes were reunited they were generally free to go. If the inspection had revealed infestations of fleas or other parasites the local sanitary inspector would also be notified, and the whole family together with their home would be deloused.[90]

This again is the official version, but as we have already seen this did not necessarily have any basis in fact. Both Fred M, who was brought up in Bethnal Green and Bill, who was brought up in Stepney, two of the poorest boroughs in the capital during the 1930s, recalled that at their schools head shaving was still the normal way of treating boys found to be infested with head lice:

> Nitty Norah. She used to come round regular. She used to have the old steel comb and a dish of disinfectant...and if she found anything... That was a haircut job then so you had to go an(d) have a haircut. 'I'll be back tomorrow'' If you han't had a haircut she made sure you F***ing had it all off like...[91]

Margaret N, who seems to have been a regular visitor, recalled that the staffs at the cleansing stations were none too gentle when dealing with her long hair:

> Every so often you'd be sent home with a card from the nit nurse. Got to go down and have your hair done at the cleaning station. Oh they pulled your head to pieces. Because I, I had long hair. I had it braided I used to have it twisted round me head; because my Nanny had the knobs, but I had mine twisted round me head. Because my hair was long, and when they sent me down there oh they killed me they really did.[92]

The school nurse's duties did not stop at personal hygiene inspections. After 1935 they were required to weigh and measure each child to check on their levels of nutrition. They were also required to look out for symptoms of illness, particularly ear nose and throat infections or sight defects, although these were more likely to be reported by the teacher, and arrange for children to have special medical examinations. School nurses

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[89] LMA PH/SHS/3/10 Cutting of Hair in which a legal opinion was sought about the compulsory cutting of children's hair. The council were advised that they were liable to face assault charges if they cut children's hair without parental consent.

[90] LMA LCC/PH/GEN/3/11 Children's Public Health

[91] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p9 see also Interview with Bill (b.1926) p9

[92] Interview with Margaret N (b.c1930) p5

were also required to make daily visits to schools that were suffering epidemics of contagious diseases, like diphtheria or measles, to check for new cases: They were also expected to carry out home visits to supervise the treatment of, and take specimens from, all children suffering from scabies and ringworm, as well as visiting the homes of special cases where care workers were unavailable.[93]

By the late 1930s as Harry again recalls some of the new schools that were being built had a resident nurse who, as well as providing on the spot treatment for minor ailments and carrying out periodic hygiene inspections, took on some of the routine care committee work and was responsible for issuing food supplements to the necessitous children within the school.[94]

3.5 Road Smash and Frog Spawn ,The Growth of The School Meals Service

Unlike the school medical inspections, in the early years the provision of meals to school children by LEAs was to be fraught with controversy and met with considerable opposition from the middle-class rate payers who objected to being forced to pay to supplement the diets of the children of the feckless poor.[95] It was argued that it was a man's duty to provide for his wife and children, and that the provision of meals in schools would encourage the working classes to waste their money on drink and gambling rather than providing for their children.

As was shown above, the 1906 Education (Provision of Meals) Act allowed local authorities to associate themselves with any committee that was prepared to supply meals for school children, provided that the authority did not pay for the food supplied. The authority was also empowered to raise a half penny rate for the provision of free meals to necessitous school children. Children, it was argued, must not be denied the benefits of education through the want of food. The 1906 Act however was only permissive; it did not place a duty upon the local authority to provide school meals, but rather gave them the powers needed to do so if they so wished.

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[93] LMA EO/STA/3/16 Children's care service general file 1910-1950

[94] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p14

[95] Stuart Mcclure, *One Hundred years of London Education 1870-1970* (London 1970) pp.99-101

As has been shown, in London the old School Board had relied for years on voluntary and charitable organisations to provide meals for the city's needy children. These meals could range from a breakfast of bread and margarine with a mug of cocoa to the traditional nourishing bowl of soup and a piece of bread.[96] In 1905 the LCC began an experiment, using its five cookery centres to prepare meals for needy children. The girls at these centres provided up to 50 meals a day at between 1½ -3d each.[97] Even after the 1906 Act the LCC continued to rely heavily on the voluntary sector to provide meals for its school children, but it soon became clear that this was not sufficient. When it was discovered in 1908 that a feeding fund established by the Lord Mayor had raised only £12,000 out of the expected £30,000 needed to provide sufficient meals, the council decided to act.[98] They established their own feeding centres where necessitous children could be fed. The numbers of children receiving meals fluctuated both with the seasons and with the economic cycle, reaching a peak in the winter of 1915 when some 15,000 children a day were being fed.

In 1914 a further Act removed the limit on the rate that local authorities (LAs) could raise to provide meals. It also removed the requirement that meals only be supplied to children when they were attending school. This allowed LAs to provide meals to needy schoolchildren at weekends and during the school holidays.[99]

During the inter-war period sections 82 and 83 of the 1921 Education Act governed the provision of school meals. Section 82 allowed LEAs to provide school meals to children provided that the authority did not pay for the food. In other words it allowed them to provide meals for paying pupils, while section 83 of the Act allowed LEAs to supply free meals to children whose education might suffer through want of food and whose parents were unable to pay. The Act did not specify the type of meal, nor the time at which it was to be provided, thus allowing LEAs to supply breakfasts dinners or teas as they saw fit, as well as allowing them to supply so-called milk meals where they thought this appropriate.

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[96] Ibid. p 99

[97] Ibid. pp .96-103

[98] Williams et al, *The Children of London* pp42-43

[99] 4&5 Geo. V Ch 20 an Act to Amend the Education (Provision of Meals) Act, 1906

The link between the numbers of meals provided and the changing economic cycle can be clearly seen during the early 1920s (Table 3.5) which shows how the numbers of meals fluctuated as the unemployment figures fluctuated.

Table 3.5 Average numbers of meals provided per week and number of necessitous children receiving free meals related to national unemployment

Year	Average No Dinners per Week	Children Found as Necessitous	Percentage rate of Unemployment
1919-20	21,160	10,235	02.0
1920-21	47,553	16,853	12.9
1921-22	82,706	26,761	14.4
1922-23	26,812	11,750	11.7
1923-24	21,214	09,982	10.3
1924-25	14,970	08,900	11.3
1925-26	13,472	09,289	12.5
1926-27	13,871	11,143	09.7

Compiled from LCC Statistics 1920-28

On 4th April 1922, in response to the demands of the Treasury for cut backs in the spiraling costs of the School Meals Service, the President of the Board of Education announced that expenditure on school meals nationally would be capped at £300,000.[100] In London this meant that the practice of providing free breakfasts to children in poorest areas, which had been a part of the school meals provision almost since the foundation of the London School Board, was finally discontinued, and was not to be reintroduced until the 1990s. At the same time the criteria for determining which children were to receive meals were tightened, and the rule that children whose parents were in receipt of public assistance were not entitled to free meals without a commensurate reduction in their parents' relief payments was more strictly enforced; while in the better off districts the provision of school meals to paying children was also curtailed. Although the spending restriction was lifted in 1924, the LCC, like most other LEAs continued to tightly control expenditure on the School Meals Service throughout the inter-war period, and the anomaly of uneven provision of meals persisted throughout the period.[101] Thus Harry B, who lived in the relatively prosperous area of Brixton in the 1930s, recalls that he used to

[100] Bernard Harris, *The Health of the School Child* pp 121-123

[101] Ibid pp 123-126

run home from school for lunch every day because there were no school dinners.[102] Just a few miles away in the much poorer district of Walworth, Ernest G remembers being given 4d a day to pay for his school dinner.[103] The LCC produced a booklet for feeding centre managers and school cooks. This offered a selection of costed menus to be used in schools in different areas, with a range of meals that could be provided for 3d, 4d and 6d a head depending on the area in which the school was situated.[104]

Although in the early 1920s some meals were still supplied by the cookery centres the majority were contracted out to charitable caterers like the Alexandra Trust and to local suppliers. The quality of the food supplied was often a cause of friction between the care committee workers, who were responsible for the provision of meals, and the children's parents. As was discussed above, problems with the quality and type of food provided by these charitable trusts led the council to withdraw their contracts and to provide all their school meals through their own cookery centres and kitchens. This however, still did not affect the general attitude of those who were responsible for the provision of food, which seems to have been that the children and their parents should be grateful for what they got and should not complain. Irene recalled that children were expected to eat whatever was put before them whether they liked it or not:

> The care workers in the school used to dish out the dinners. I didn't like them. They was very strict, 'you must eat this up you must eat that,' you know and even if you didn't want it you felt sick, they'd still make you eat it because you had to have a meal even if it was only one meal a day.[105]

The feeding centres did not simply provide the children with food; they were also seen as a method of instilling discipline and good manners in the children of the poorest classes.[106] Thus, the children were made to queue quietly outside and then march into the centre. Older children were required to act as monitors, setting the tables and serving the food. The children were closely supervised while they ate to make sure that they used 'proper' table manners, asking politely for the salt, and keeping their elbows off the

[102] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p15

[103] Interview With Ernest G (b.1927)

[104] LMA Ed50/78 School Meals Service

[105] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p12

[106] LMA EO/WEL/3/2 Minutes of Battersea & Wandsworth Local association of care committees 1917-1922

tables and never speaking while eating. If a child did not behave properly it was likely not to be fed.[107] Each centre employed a supervisor who was responsible for keeping both the children and staff in order, and a number of local women as meal supervisors to ensure that the children abided by the rules. These in turn were supervised by periodic visits by members of the Care Committee.[108]

The provision of milk within schools became something of an issue during the inter-war period with many LEAs establishing milk schemes. There were two ways in which milk was provided to London school children. Many schools established milk clubs under the 1923 Milk in School scheme through which the children received a 1/3rd of a pint of milk for the payment of just 1d a day (see Figure 4.1). Children who were deemed by the school doctor to need nourishment might receive their milk free of charge under section 83 of the 1921 Education Act.

The method of providing free school milk in London caused controversy when it was discovered that children receiving free milk had to go to a special centre, rather than joining their classmates in the daily queue to get their bottle. The excuse made by the council's officials was that, yes, necessitous children did have to go to a feeding centre to get their milk but this was because it was warmed for them. This practice was soon stopped after pressure was brought to bear on the officials by members of the council, after which necessitous children queued up with their classmates to receive their daily bottle.[109]

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[107] Ibid.

[108] Ibid.

[109] LMA PH/SHS/1/12 Nutrition of School Children

Figure 3.1 Milk in School Scheme Application Form

c. MILK IN SCHOOLS

Arrangements have been made to start a milk club in this department of the school, and your child can buy for ONE PENNY one third of a pint of milk. The milk will be delivered in a sealed bottle and the child supplied with a straw through which to drink it.

MILK Makes Muscles.

MILK Makes Bones, Teeth and Blood.

MILK Helps in Work and Play.

MILK Is needed for Growth and Health.

If you wish your child to have milk, please sign and return this slip.

I wish my child to have milk at school.

*Signature*__________

Issued by The National Milk Publicity Council (Inc.) 35, Gordon Square, W.C.

Taken from PRO ED50/ 79Milk in Schools Scheme 1920-31

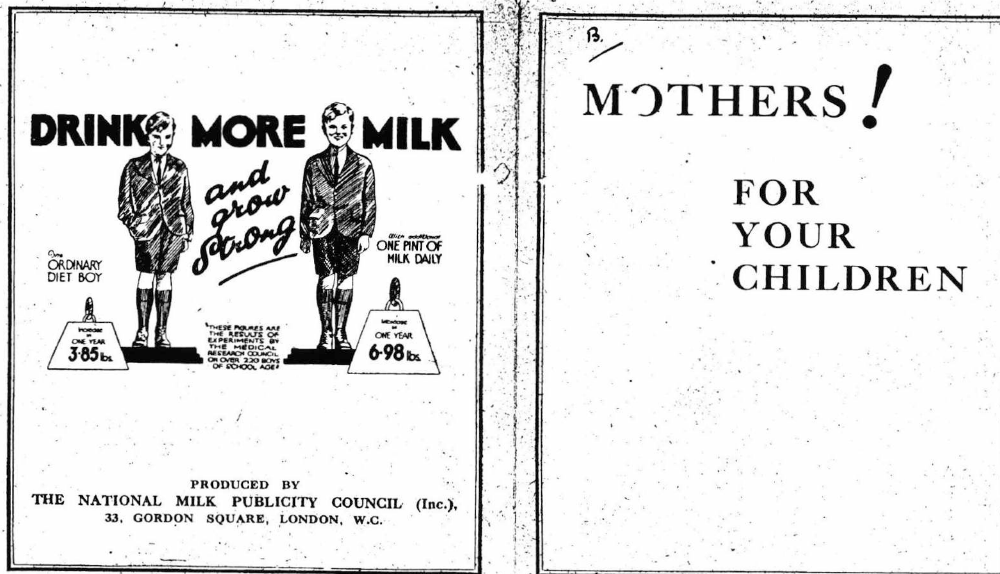
The government was keen to promote the provision of milk in schools as this was hoped to increase the consumption of milk in the home. The 1929 report of the National Milk Publicity Council, which boasted that in the previous year the milk in school scheme had sold an extra 3,000,000 gallons with a retail value of £300,000, shows that this was not so much from a concern about the beneficial effects of increased milk consumption on the health of children, but as a means of helping to support the farming community.[110]

Although there had been a series of reports throughout the 1920s highlighting the benefits of milk consumption for growing children (see Figure 4.2 & 4.3), the milk lobby had to overcome parental fears about the dangers of tuberculosis from contaminated milk.

[110] PRO EO 50/79 Milk in Schools Scheme 1920-31

In 1929, for example, Leeds City Council came under fire in the press when an outbreak of the disease at Roundhay Street school was traced to the provision of cheap unpasteurised and untested milk in the schools milk scheme.[111]

Figure 3.2 Drink More Milk Leaflet Stressing the Benefits of Milk



Taken from PRO ED 50/79 Milk Schemes 1919-1933

Figure 4.3 Drink More Milk leaflet Stressing the benefits of milk

MILK IN SCHOOLS

BREAKFAST *about* 8 a.m.
DINNER *about* 12.30 p.m.

BREAKFAST until Dinner is too long for most children to be without food.

Milk at school provides at the proper time just the right kind and amount of food for children between these meals.

TIRED *about* 10.30 a.m.

A bottle of milk at this hour renews the child's energy.
It helps to build up the child's resistance to disease.

BECAUSE
MILK MAKES MUSCLES.
MILK MAKES BONES-TEETH-BLOOD.
MILK HELPS IN WORK AND PLAY
MILK IS NEEDED FOR GROWTH AND HEALTH

MILK FOR HEALTH

FOR the best development of bones and teeth and general good health every child should have at least a pint of milk each day—because milk provides all the essentials to growth and health in the best possible form.

Milk at school provides a part of the milk needed each day.

PRACTISE GOOD FOOD HABITS

Twenty-five or thirty happy children each with a bottle of milk, the joy of a straw—and what do you have? Not just a plain bottle of milk but a party. Five "milk parties" a week and soon milk becomes a habit.

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[111] Ibid.

Taken from PRO ED 50 / 79 Milk Schemes 1920-33

The establishment of the Milk Marketing Board in 1934 led to the introduction of a new National Milk in Schools scheme under which the government granted £500,000 to allow the Board of Education to provide cheap milk to schools. This scheme meant that the cost to parents of school milk was halved to just ½d a day; this led to a marked rise in the numbers of children receiving milk, so that by 1939 2.7 million children nationally were receiving milk under the scheme.[112]

One unexpected problem with the provision of milk to schoolchildren was its rejection by older boys. In London it was found that, while there had been a good take up of milk in the Infants and Girls departments of elementary schools in the Boys departments it was different story. Many boys refused milk, saying that they did not like it. Even when it was provided free many boys were reluctant to be seen drinking it. It would seem that milk was regarded as a drink for girls, babies and weaklings rather than boys, who, if found drinking it, were likely to be labeled as sissies and ridiculed by their peers.[113]

3.6 The Nutrition Debate

One of the principal concerns and subjects of debate during the inter-war period was the issue of nutrition. This was especially true during the periods of economic stringency, initially just after the war, and then again in the recession of 1922-24, and, of course, during the depression of the early 1930s. Although the debate centred on the depressed areas of the North East, there was concern in the capital about the nutrition of London's school population.

In 1934 a special report was commissioned by the council on the nutrition of school children in the Shoreditch district where, at first sight, there seemed to be a marked imbalance in the number of free meals being provided to children in three adjacent schools.[114] The report showed that, while the numbers of children varied, the number of families concerned was very similar in all three schools; in the school with the largest

[112] Bernard Harris, *The Health of the School Child* pp 120-126.

[113] PRO EO 50/224 - EO50/227 Milk in schools

[114] LMA PH/SHS/1/12 Nutrition of school children Special report Shoreditch District

number of cases, one family contributed seven children, although in most families there were one or two children who received free meals.[115]

In 1932, at the height of concerns about the malnutrition of school children, the council's medical officer reported that there was very little malnutrition among the capital's school population. He published the nutritional data gathered from the routine medical inspections conducted by the SMS in 1931 to support his findings

Table 3.6 State of Nutrition of London's School Children 1931

		1	2	3-4
Entrants	Boys	20.3	75.3	4.4
	Girls	22.6	73.8	3.6
8 Years	Boys	15.8	77.6	6.6
	Girls	20.2	74.8	5.0
12 Years	Boys	18.3	76.5	5.2
	Girls	20.5	75.3	4.2
14 Years	Boys	22.7	73.7	3.6
	Girls	26.6	70.5	2.9
Total		20.6	74.9	4.5

1= Especially Well Nourished
2=Average
3=Subnormal
4=Very ill Nourished

Taken from LMA PH/SHS/1/12 Nutrition of School Children 1932

The problem with these figures, as was recognized at the time, was that they depended on the assessment of individual medical officers. There was no standard criterion for judging the nutrition of children. The Board of Education had instructed medical officers to classify children as good, normal, below normal and bad but gave no indication as to what these terms were to mean.[116] Thus medical officers were required to use their own judgment. It was found that medical officers who were used to working in better off districts would be inclined to classify many more children from a poor distinct as undernourished than would a doctor who was used to working there. The converse was

[115] Ibid.

[116] Bernard Harris, *Health of the School Child* pp 130-133

also true, as doctors who were used to working in poor areas tended to be a lot more optimistic about the condition of better off children.[117]

In spite of the Council's Medical Officer of Health's previous reassurances (1932) that there was no significant malnutrition in the capital, the Labour controlled council that had come into power in 1934 instituted a monitoring scheme in 1935 under which all elementary school children were to be weighed and measured every six months. This was in order that those who were found to be failing to thrive could be subjected to special investigations and, if found necessary, supplied with milk or nutritional supplements like malt and cod-liver oil or in the worst cases with free meals in school. Using this data, it was decided to update the council's standard height and weight tables. Thus a report giving average heights and weights of boys and girls by year of birth was produced. [118] The study looked at approximately 100,000 children across the capital who were weighed, first in the period March-May 1938, and again between September-November. The study found that there were marked differences, both in the weights and heights of children attending central and elementary schools, and between children from richer and poorer boroughs.

In the case of central school children it was found that boys were on average 2.5% and girls 2.8% taller, while boys were on average 6.2% and girls 8.1% heavier than children of the same age attending ordinary elementary schools. The report points out that the proportion of central school children was comparatively small, and so, because they were drawn from a wide area, they were excluded from the tables giving average weights and heights, both for the individual boroughs and from the general table of average weights and heights.[119]

Given that most of London's central schools were located in better class areas, and that children from middle or upper working-class homes were much more likely to go to grammar or central schools than those from either the ordinary or poorest sections of the working class (see chapter 2), it seems clear that central school pupils would be

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[117] Ibid. pp. 130-136

[118] Sir Frederick Menzies, *Report on the Average Heights and Weights of Elementary School Children in the County of London in 1938* (London 1940) p 1

[119] Ibid. PP 2-3

less likely to suffer from malnutrition than the general elementary school population. Even when the central school children were excluded, however, the report found that on average London's school children were 1cm taller and 1.5Kg heavier than the national average. The report also compared its finding with those from an earlier survey of 1905-12 and found that:

> 'Taking the total age range there has been an average increase of 5.6cm (2.2 in) in the height and 3.4kg (7.5lb) in the weight of boys and 5.4cm(2.1 in) and 3.7kg (8.1lb) for girls. [120]

The report thus concluded that:

> 'During the last thirty years the improvement in the physique of London elementary school children has been greater than that experienced on the average by elementary school children in other parts of England.[121]

Although it is undoubtedly true that there had been a marked improvement in the physique and, by implication, nutrition of the capital's children's in the 30 years between the two surveys, this rather self congratulatory conclusion made no distinction between children in different parts of the capital. While recognising that there was a difference between the heights and weights of children from poorer and better off boroughs, no attempt was made to analyse these findings or to discover why there was such a marked difference. In defense of the Council, however, it should be pointed out that by the time the report was published (1940) the country was embroiled in war.

Taking the weight and height figures for just three age groups, those born in 1933 (aged 5 at time of survey), those born in 1929 (aged 9), and those born in 1925 (aged 14) (Table 4.7) it can be seen that there was a significant difference between both the weights and heights of children from better off and poorer districts in all three age groups, although the differences become more marked the older the children became.

[120] Ibid P 9

[121] Ibid p9

Table 3.7 Height and Weight tables

Borough	year born 1933 Height In Cms Boys	Girls	Year Born 1929 Height in Cms Boys	Girls	Year Born 1925 Height in Cms Boys	Girls	Year Born 1933 Weight Kg Boys	Girls	Year Born 1929 Weight Kg Boys	Girls	Year Born 1925 Weight Kg Boys	Girls
County of l	106.4	105.6	128.8	128	147.3	149.6	18.55	18.07	27.53	27	39.55	41.54
Battersea	106.6	105.4	128.5	128.1	148.1	149.3	18.6	17.8	27.2	26.8	39.4	40.7
Bermondse	105.1	104.9	128.3	127.1	147.9	149.4	18.7	17.8	27.3	26.6	40.6	41.6
Bethnal Gr	107.2	105.8	129	128.2	147.6	148.7	18.6	18.5	27.5	26.8	41.5	43.2
Camberwe	107.1	106.2	128.8	128	148.3	149.9	18.6	18.5	27.2	28	40	41.6
Chelsea	107.1	105.6	129.2	128	147.1	148.6	18.6	17.8	27.7	26.9	39.7	41.3
Deptford	106.4	106.2	128.8	128.3	148.7	150.9	18.3	17.7	27.3	26.6	39.6	42.2
Finsbury	105.3	104.3	128.2	128.5	145.5	149.1	17.8	17.8	27.5	25.9	39.6	41.3
Fulham	106.3	105.7	128.8	127.6	148.1	150.1	18.7	18	27.6	26.7	39.9	43.1
Greenwich	105.7	106.6	128.6	128.7	148.6	152.2	18.8	18.4	27.1	27	41	41.3
Hackney	106.9	105.5	128.8	128.1	148.1	150.6	18.6	17.9	27.5	27.4	39.5	42.3
Hammersn	106.1	105.1	127.6	127.6	149.1	151.4	18.5	17.6	26.7	26.6	40	42.3
Hampstea(	109.1	106.8	131.1	129	149.4	151.4	19.5	18.8	29.6	27.5	41.5	43.1
Islington	105.9	104.9	128.6	128	145.8	148.1	18.4	17.5	27.2	26.7	38.3	40.7
Kensingtor	107.4	106.6	128.4	128.2	146.9	150.1	18.4	18.5	27.3	27.1	39.1	42.6
Lambeth	107	106.1	129.4	128.5	147.8	150.1	18.7	18.3	27.7	27.2	39.9	41.4
Lewisham	106.8	106.9	129.7	128.3	147.8	149.8	18.6	18.5	27.4	26.6	39.6	41.1
Paddingtor	104.9	103.7	129.4	128.3	147.2	151.1	17.3	17.4	28	27.5	39.4	42.3
Poplar	105.7	104.9	128.2	127.2	145.5	148.1	18.3	17.7	27	26.6	38.4	41.3
St Pancras	107.1	105.6	127.8	127.5	146.9	147.9	18.5	18.1	26.9	26.5	39.3	39.7
Shoreditch	104.9	104.6	127.4	126.4	144.3	145.8	18.2	18	27.2	26.5	36.9	38.2
Southwick	106.5	105.9	129	127	146.7	149	18.4	18.2	27.9	26.6	39.2	41.3
Stepney	105.8	104.4	127.8	127.2	146.2	148.6	18.5	18	27.5	27	39.3	41.5
Wandswori	108.3	106.7	130.2	129	147.3	151.1	18.8	18.2	28	27	39.4	41.8
Westminst	107.2	104.2	130.2	129	148.5	149.9	18.2	17.6	28.4	27.6	40	42.6

Height and Weight Tables taken from Sir Frederick Menzies, *Report on the Average Heights and Weights of Elementary School Children in the County of London in 1938* (London 1940)

The large discrepancy between the heights of girls from different areas may be explained by the fact that girls from the better off boroughs had their pubescent growth spurt at a younger age than those from poorer boroughs. Assuming that heights and, more importantly weights, of children provide some indication of their levels of nutrition, it would seem clear from these results that, as might be expected, the levels of malnutrition varied across the capital and that, while the overall level of malnutrition might only be about 4.5% of the school population, there were areas of the city in which the levels of child malnutrition were much higher. Indeed it is possible to see from these figures which boroughs were wealthy and which poor; perhaps the greatest difference can be seen between the affluent Hampstead and the poor area of Shoreditch, between which there was a 4cm difference in the height and 1.3kg in weight between boys entering school, while by the time they left there was a difference of 5.1 cm in height and 4.4kg in weight for girls the differences were even more marked. If these figures are compared with those quoted for Newcastle by M'Gonigle and Kirby in their 1936 study *of Poverty and Public Health*,[122] which stated that 55.2% of city children were found to be below the national

[122] G.C.M. M'Gonigle & J. Kirby, *Poverty and Public Health* (London 1936)

average weight and 47.0% below the average national height for their age group. It seems clear that, in spite of the capital's reputation as being the centre of the prosperous South East, children in the poorest districts of London were liable to be as malnourished as the children of the special areas of Wales and the North East.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the school welfare, medical, and meals services grew up together amid concerns about the declining state of the nation's fitness and national efficiency that had been raised by the poor state of the recruits for the Boer War at the beginning of the century. It has also been shown how government-imposed restrictions affected the development of these services.

The chapter began by showing how the children's welfare provision was dependent upon an army of middle-class women voluntary workers, supervised and directed by a small core of paid professionals. It showed how as the roles and life-styles of these women changed in the inter-war years the welfare services suffered, with some schools, particularly in poorest districts, being reduced to relying on the schools staff to form care committees. It has also been shown how stereotypical attitudes towards poor children influenced the ways in which they were treated and expected to behave.

The chapter has followed the forging of links between the Schools Medical Service and local hospitals. This provided a limited range of treatments, and demonstrated how those links could become strained at times, with the hospitals apparently seeing the treatment of elementary school children as an extra burden imposed on them simply as a means to raise money. It has been shown how the School Medical Service was restricted in the range of treatments it could provide both, by the financial restrictions imposed by the block grant system but also by legislation that prevented school medical officers treating their young patients outside the confines of the school environment. It has been seen that the London County Council's School Medical service was, under some circumstances, prepared to provide additional treatment for some of the most deprived children, through the use of ultra-violet light and open-air schools, but it was also shown that for most children there was little or no medical provision outside the school system. Thus, if they were taken ill at home or if they caught one of the common childhood maladies, they were reliant on their parents' pockets and the good nature of

local doctors for their treatment. The work of the school nursing service has been explored in some depth. This was to highlight some of the problems facing the school authorities between the wars and to demonstrate that action could be, and was, taken to help the most deprived children. This theme was also taken up in the study of the school meals service, which showed that, again, financial considerations were the main limiting factor on the provision of meals for school children both in London and the rest of the country. It was shown how, for political reasons, the government was unable, or more precisely unwilling, to admit that there was a nutritional problem with the nation's children, which was exacerbated by the rule that the children of the unemployed and those in receipt of public assistance were not allowed to have school meals. Finally, it was shown that, despite official claims to the contrary, children in some of the poorest parts of the capital were as undernourished as those in the depressed areas of Wales and the North East. Again this fact could not be admitted at the time for political reasons.

CHAPTER 4
THE CHILD AT PLAY

In this chapter we seek to enter that most secret place of childhood, the land of play. We will start by looking at just where children played, asking were the capital's back streets the only playgrounds of working-class children or did they have access to alternative play spaces and, if so, what and where they were? What sorts of toys did working-class children have? Where did they come from and were they new or second-hand? What games did they play play, both inside and outside the home, and when did they play them? Were the games children played affected by the seasons or the weather? What role did age and gender and a family's position within the working class have on the choice of games that individual children played? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in the first section of this chapter.

The way that certain games could lead to conflict with authority will also be explored, showing how some games accidentally led to conflict with adult authority while others, particularly those played by rougher boys, were deliberately aimed at annoying adults and challenging that authority.

The effects of fears about the formation of gangs and the moral and physical deterioration of the nation, which had first been raised after the Boer War, will then be examined showing how these fears affected adult attitudes towards children's play activities. It will be shown how the efforts of various organisations were directed towards combating these fears and the promotion of the idea that a health body led to a healthy mind.

We will look at what types of sporting activities were offered by the various youth organisations and local education authorities, to discover how attitudes towards gender stereotypes influenced the choice of physical activities that were made available to children both inside and outside school. It will be shown how concerns about the physical fitness of the nation's youth led to 'a cult of fresh air' and in this regard the efforts of charitable organisations (principally the Children's Country Holiday Fund) to take children out of the capital's polluted back streets for a break in the fresh air of the countryside will be examined in a case study.

We will go on to look at organised play activities, including the work of the uniformed youth organisations like the Boys' and Girls' Brigades, the Scouts and

Guides, together with that of the Education and other Local Authorities. Then attempt to discover what provisions were made for after school activities for working-class children through the uniformed youth organisations Church Clubs and School Play Centres. The development and influence of the government sponsored Joint Organisation Committees (JOCs) that were established across the capital to co-ordinate youth work, will also be explored to discover how these committees influenced the individual charitable youth organisations and ask, to what degree did they achieve a unified system of juvenile recreation.

Finally, the growing role of the media in the shaping of children's activities will be examined, through the traditional medium of books and comics, together with the new media of the Radio or perhaps, more importantly, the Cinema.

In order to achieve these aims this chapter will use various sources including both Government and Local Authorities archives, as well as various books both published at the time and later; but more importantly this chapter, like the others in this thesis, will to a large extent be reliant on autobiographical and oral testimony to provide a picture of children's play activities.

4.1 Girls and Boys Come Out to Play

Where did London's children play? Unless they were lucky enough to live near a park or a piece of waste ground, or be one of the fortunate few to live in a house with a garden, most of London's working-class children, like their brothers and sisters in other British cities, played in the city's grimy back streets and courts. There were parks, of course, often with specially equipped and supervised playgrounds. Even those areas of parks not designated as play areas were supervised either by that arch enemy of children's lives the park-keeper, or in the London's royal parks, by the Royal Parks Police, but even with all of this adult supervision, parks still had their dangers as Amy remembered:

> We used to go to the Park (Hyde Park)... and of course I got assaulted there. This horrible man came up and he sat down by me and of course his hand went up my skirt, I jumped up I got all the kids together and in the pram they went and we went out that park and the policeman on the gate he tried to stop us wondering why why, why, we didn't stop. And I went home and told my mother and she nearly gave me a good hiding. And the policeman on the gate, they were used to children and they should have got a lot of information. They were after this man they knew he was in the park so we didn't go there anymore. [1]

[1] Interview With Amy (b.1908) p5

The park was not just a dangerous place for girls. As Bryan Forbes recalled, boys too could be the subjects of unwanted adult attention:

> It happened while I was playing with another friend, Albert Herbert and his dog Trixie .We had ventured as far as the Giant's Basin I was hiding and Albert was searching for me. It was Trixie who gave the first warning at her barking I looked up through the tall grass to see a stranger regarding me. He was dressed quite normally if somewhat shabbily, in a fawn raincoat and a trilby hat. He had a soft and calming voice and he offered me sixpence- a vast sum- if I would 'do him a treat' Some instinct warned me to refuse the offer...he repeated the request and then in classic style, whipped open the raincoat to reveal himself totally naked and to my eye amazingly deformed.[2]

For poorer children a trip to the park was a special event, as parks were few and far between in the capital's poorest districts. When a park was nearby younger children still needed an elder sibling or, on rare occasions, a parent to take them. Many people recall trips to the park, with an older sister pushing her younger siblings in an old pram with their supply of bread and dripping and a bottle of sherbet lemonade tucked safely in between them:

> We had to go to Battersea Park and that wasn't a very good park because there wasn't much had a few swings there but not much at Hyde Park they had all paddling and all that business, but they never had a policeman. It was holiday time and we had to walk from Princes Gate right to the other side of the park to get to that, to get to that, you know roundabouts and swings and thing like that. And I always had a big pram with all the bread and drip (sic) in it. Not allowed to drink out of cups we had to have their old mugs my mother sent me off with the old mugs and used to have go and get our water out of there with instruction not to let any of that muck from the taps drop in the mugs. Oh dear, well she was right really, because the tramps and everybody else drunk out of that water so that was that.[3]

In some ways children who lived in the flats built by the Peabody Trust or in the new LCC blocks that started to appear after the Great War were luckier, because these blocks were normally provided with a large open asphalted square, sometimes with swings and even a roundabout or maypole on which they could play. But even here children could find unusual places to play as Amy again remembers:

> In front of the buildings where we were there was some big dustbins. We used to sit on top of the dustbins, you know, those old fashioned bins and you used to have to lift the middle up... disgusting really.[4]

These areas were, however, reserved for the residents, and woe betide any child from outside who dared to play there uninvited. For just as children in some districts defended their back street from the children of other streets, so the children of the flats would defend their courtyards from intrusions from outside; while in the

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[2] Bryan Forbes, *Notes for a Life* (London 1974) pp 23-24

[3] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p5

winter or on wet days the landings and stairwells of these blocks provided a safe and dry playground.

When asked where they played all of the contributors said that they played outside, either in the back streets, or in the asphalted squares. When asked about wet or cold weather, some, particularly the male respondents, said that 'a bit of rain' didn't interfere with their games. Most however said that on cold or wet days they would play indoors, but in the passage or hallway rather than in any of the rooms of the family home. They recalled that on wet days the front door would still be open but that a group of children would gather in the passage of one or other of their houses and play quietly, possibly drawing or cutting things out. Some, particularly the female respondents, remembered playing shops using pieces of paper or bits and pieces as goods and buttons as money.

So what sorts of games did they play outside? In their seminal works on play, Iona and Peter Opie list hundreds of children's games, but the Londoners interviewed remembered only a few.

A particular favourite, which was recalled by most contributors, was 'Tin Can Tommy' or, as Dusty and other Londoners called it, 'Tin Can Copper'. Although the game described by them is slightly different from that of the Opies' it is intrinsically the same:[5]

> You got an old tin can, like a cocoa tin or something like that, and you'd put the can in the middle of the street. We used to play in the street 'because there was no traffic at that time. And you'd put two sticks crosswise across the top of the can, and you'd have a ball, right, and you'd get either side of the can about ten feet away, either side, and you'd throw the ball at the tin can, and one of you was nominated to start it. And the moment that the sticks got knocked off the can, if it was your turn to rush for the can. You had to pick the can up and everybody went and hid. And when you saw somebody you'd search around. You had to leave the can in the middle of the road and you had to search around further then that so that they could creep in the back get hold of the can and throw it further down the road, so you had to chase after it and you had to be back to that spot when you called and say **JOHNNY JONES 1,2,3 TIN CAN COPPER** until you caught all of them and if you was a bit slow in running you was there all bloody day.[6]

Other types of chasing games like; Kiss-chase, Hide and Seek and various forms of Tag and He were also recalled. These chasing games were normally played by boys and girls together, indeed for some like Kiss-chase this was essential. Other

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Iona and Peter Opie, *Children's Games in Street and Playground* (London 1969) p 161.

[6] Interview with Dusty (b.1927) p7

games that were played by both boys and girls included marbles, conkers, and various forms of hopscotch, but although they were playing the same games boys and girls often seem to have played them separately. Both boys and girls played gambling games like 'Flicks', in which the contestants flicked cigarette cards up against a wall, although it would seem likely that these sort of games were more often played by boys than girls. Older girls appear to have been more inclined to play ring and rhyme games like 'Ring a Ring of Roses' and 'Oranges and Lemons' with younger children, although the latter could get quite rough when it came to 'chopping of the heads'. Girls also seem to have played Hopscotch more often than boys. Generally the boys' games appear to have been rougher than the girls' games. Rough games like 'Hi Jimmy Knacker', as it was known in the East End, were played almost exclusively by boys:[7]

> You stood against the wall and you split up into two teams and the bloke behind you would hang onto your waist and so on until you'd got a line out and the others was allowed one leap only and they had to leap as far as they could up the line and the others had to have enough room to get on the back. You was allowed to fidget when you got on. The idea was that if you could break them down that was holding on the wall and they collapsed you was the winners but if they held you up in some way the score went the other way.[8]

This, like many other boys' games, was a trial of strength, the stronger team won. Girls' games on the other hand seemed almost designed to prepare them for motherhood. As Anna Davin and Elizabeth Roberts point out, unlike their better off sisters many working-class girls had real babies to care for rather than just playing with dolls. As was shown in chapter one it was often the job of an elder sister to care for her younger siblings, taking them to the park, or supervising them on the street or simply taking a baby brother or sister for a walk in the pram. As Angela Rodaway recalled, girls often felt very grown up when they were allowed to take a younger sibling out on their own.[9] The games that these little mothers played were also directed towards copying or in some ways parodying the adult world. Such games included playing 'mothers and fathers' often with an older girl taking on the role of father, or 'school' in which an older girl would gather together all of the younger children in the street. She would then be the teacher, lining up her young charges in neat rows, while she gave them lessons, and sometimes punishment; while the other

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[7] This game was also known as 'Walley Lines' in North Kensington and has a whole range of other names across the country.

[8] Interview with Dusty (b.1928) p.7

children practiced the tricks that they would have liked, but never dared, to play on their real teachers.

Other games were strictly seasonal, like marbles in the spring or conkers in the autumn, and sometimes designed to make a profit. In late September or early October, for example, homes across the capital would be raided for an old pair of father's trousers, a jersey, even an old shirt and some old newspaper or cardboard. Then groups of children would gather in tight huddles in backyards, working secretly together until, in the last week of October, on every street corner and outside every public house, groups of children would be found proudly displaying the fruits of their labours with the cry of '*Penny for the Guy.*' In some of the poorer districts gangs of children pushing their 'Guys' in an old pram would go around the streets knocking on doors demanding their pennies. Even if they could not find enough material to make a guy children still went out 'guying': as Tom McCarthy recalled they simply dressed up a younger boy:

> When we were dressing up as a guy we blacked our faces and put on tatty, dark clothes and topped the whole outfit off with the largest old hat we could get. Sometimes the effect was very good and we fooled many people if we sat still long enough, especially in the dark.[10]

During the long summer holidays other groups of children mostly, but not exclusively, girls would be found guarding another display of work:

> If you had an empty shoe box, you would take one end out and put in a bit of grease proof paper, and them you'd make a scene in there, perhaps a fairy scene: a few rocks, a few flowers and a couple of fairies all made out of paper and painted by hand. You'd take ages to make this grotto. You wouldn't know what you were going to see.[11]

Irene described an alternative form of grotto:

> A grotto. It was just a small a little grotto, like that, and inside was all animals and that, and you had little cards and whatever card you picked you got a little animal out of the grotto. It was like, what can I say? It was oval, we built it or the kids the kids built it, and it used to have all little animals in and all little picture cards it was a sort of a game we used to play.[12]

Another profitable activity was as Phyllis Willmott recalled organising a street fair:

> Once a year in the summer holidays it would get about that 'the fair' was to begin...money changed hands-farthings-halfpennies- for a go in the Lucky Dips or raffles or the chance to buy coconut candy made by some of the more doting (or less hard pressed) mum than ours. Girls

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[9] Angela Rodaway, *A London Childhood* (London 1960) pp56-71
[10] Tom McCarthy, Boysie p102
[11] Minnie Dingwall, in *They Were Happy Days: Memories of Growing up in North Kensington* (London 1983)
[12] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p7

> plied posies of garden flowers or drinks made from sherbet powder, and both girls and boys made bargain offers of possessions no longer loved.[13]

There were marked age differences in the games children played. Younger children would have their own chase games like 'What's the Time Mr Wolf?' or rhyming games like 'Ring a Ring a Roses' and 'Oranges and Lemons' that they were taught to play in school and which the older children would not condescend to play, except perhaps an older sister acting as the wolf. As children got older so their games changed: a game that a child might have happily played one year would be seen as babyish and quite beyond their dignity the next, while, particularly for the boys, their field of play also got broader and they would stray further from home as Fred S remembers. Quite young boys would wander, embarking on voyages of exploration across the city:

> We used to go down the exhibitions down the museums during the summer holidays…it was when we was over the town I should think from about eight or nine I used to walk there to Exhibition Rd.[14]

Many games were very gender specific especially for older children. No boy worth his salt, for example, would be seen dead with a skipping rope outside the confines of the boxing gym, while it was frowned upon for girls to join in games of football or to go swimming in the canal. Girls were expected to behave in a 'proper lady like manner' and woe be tide them if they were caught by a neighbour, or worse still, a parent, doing something like a handstand against a wall. That was considered to be un-ladylike.

4.2 Meccano and Dolls' Prams

This chapter has already discussed some of the games that were popular with London's children, like hopscotch, marbles, school and Tin Can copper, but what toys did the children of London have to play with? Where did they come from and were they new or second hand?[15] The availability of toys seems, as might be expected, to have been very much a class and wealth issue. Those children brought up in the better off homes had, on the whole, a greater selection of toys with which to play. Harry

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[13] Phyllis Willmott, *Growing up in a London Village* (London 1979) p33

[14] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) p8

[15] A good discussion of the range of toys available to the children of the inter-war period can be found in Nicholas Whittaker, *Toys Were Us: A Twentieth Century History of Toys* (London 2001)

brought up in the upper working-class area of Brixton, for example, had an expensive electric train set that was the envy of other boys in the neighbourhood, something that would have been quite useless to boys from poorer homes who did not have an electrical power supply. Dusty boasted a whole battalion of lead soldiers and a tricycle upon which he and his friends used to run time trials around the yard of the block of flats in which he lived. On the other hand, other people recall that they had very few toys. Alice S for example, when asked what sort of toys she had said 'didn't have a lot of toys. Mum couldn't afford it. She had six of us you see.'[16] Family size was, as we saw in chapter one, an important factor in all aspects of children's lives. The number and types of toys that an individual child might own was in some respects dependent on the number of his or her siblings and on the age of those siblings. Thus Harry, who was brought up as an only child, had a large and expensive model train set while Dusty inherited many of his soldiers from his older brother. The older children in large or poor families would have been the least likely to have large numbers of toys. Amy, for instance, was the eldest of ten children and when asked what sort of toys she had replied, 'I never had any toys. Christmas time used to get some of them wooden things for the little ones.'[17] The youngest would have been likely to have the most toys as, like Dusty, they received both hand-me –down toys from their elder siblings and presents from working elder brothers and sisters at birthday and Christmas times. It was, as usual, the middle children who tended to lose out, because large families were still generally too poor to provide many toys for the children, and those that the middle children were likely to get were often second or third hand having been handed down from older siblings.

In the East End the various church missions would reward good attendance with a bag of sweets and a toy at Christmas as George remembers:

> In the winter time before Christmas you saved the tickets, and you go in there and give them the tickets and you get apple, bag of sweets, and you go pick out your toys, but you know the kids, children, girls always picked a black doll always, and I pick out a magic lantern a battery one, and I went home and I took a white sheet off the bed I held it up on the wall like that. Got this magic lantern put a battery in it and it lit up and go put slides in it and showed um on the sheet. I remember so well doing that.... yeah used to go and get your toy. And when you came out the side door of the East End Mission, used to be your mother and father waiting for you, and as you come out they'd be in two be two lines and as you come whoever you mother and father would grab hold of you 'that's my child' and take you home.[18]

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[16] Interview with Alice S (b.1908) p6
[17] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p11
[18] Interview with George (b.1920) p4

Other charitable groups also used to provide small toys for children. Alice S remembers her mother going to the Church Army which used to sell 'penny bundles' of children's clothing. In the middle of these she would often find a small doll or a model car a prized treasure to a poor child. For most children, however, toys were acquired either as Christmas or birthday presents or, in a few cases, gifts during illness, although as was described in chapter 3, the recipients in these cases did not always get to keep them.

So what sorts of toys did London's working-class children play with? It would seem that toys could be divided into several different types: outdoor, indoor, shop bought and home made, new or second-hand.

For the boys, outdoor toys included footballs and cricket sets, while for the girls a skipping rope was an essential accessory. Both boys and girls had skates, bicycles and scooters as well as balls, whips and tops and hoops. Boys in particular would often make their own toys: a few sticks and a piece of string could be turned into a bow and arrow or two pieces of wood might be nailed together to make a sword. The more ambitious or technically minded would, as Fred S recalled, build their own carts or wooden scooters:

> Scooters, get two ball bearings and two bits of wood or get a pram with the wheels and go and get a wooden box, a fruit box, and nail a long plank on it. And you'd put an axle on the front with two wheels on and a bit of string on either side and used to sit on the box like pretend you was driving the horses like a stage coach but there was always something to do in them days.[19]

Other toys could be used both inside and outside the home like marbles, ally gobs (five stones) or collecting cigarette cards, which were begged from parents or other adults. These were often used for gambling by flicking them up against a wall, the winner taking all. Another popular item for children, particularly boys, to collect were used bus tickets which, as Harry explained, could be acquired free of charge at any bus stop or terminus:

> We was great collectors of cigarette cards and bus tickets. We all used to have our bus stops in Acre Lane. There was four bus stops in Acre Lane, we took one each and as people came off their bus of a night, coming home from work we used to walk up and accost them. 'Got any fag cards mister' and we used to do pretty well out of it. And now and again the conductor used to kick the bottom of his ticket box and let it fall on the platform and we used to scoop up arm falls of tickets, each trying to get a complete set, but of course it was absolutely impossible to do that, as we realise now. Yes I became quite adept at sorting out bus tickets,

[19] Interview with Fred S (b.1927) p7

> stuck them in countless exercise books, never any good to anybody you couldn't, you couldn't sell the things and nobody wanted to swoop them but it was just an interest.[20]

For boys, toys tended to be either militaristic or technical: lead soldiers and tin plate tanks or clockwork battleships seem to have been popular, as did train sets and Meccano. This was a construction toy consisting of a collection of small pieces of metal in various shapes and colours which could be bolted together to create buildings or, more often, intricate mechanical devices like cranes and mechanical diggers. Girls' toys were generally more homely, dolls, dolls' houses, and dolls' prams all of which were popular with children from more prosperous families, as were things like blackboards and easels. Books and comics, as will be discussed below, were popular with both boys and girls. In poorer households children would adapt common everyday objects into toys; thus a box of buttons could be used as money in a game of shops, or turned into an army or simply sorted by size or colour, while an old shoe box might become a crib, or a house, perhaps even a garage or a fort.

4.3 Little Hooligans

Some seemingly quite harmless games could lead children into conflict with authority in the shape of the local policeman. One game that most city children remember is swinging from a lamppost. The procedure was always the same: the children would find a discarded piece of rope or maybe 'borrow' a washing line. One of the boys would then shin up the post and tie it to one of the extending arms, and there it was, an instant swing for all to enjoy until, as Violet recalled, the local policeman was spotted:

> When we had the old houses we used to play. Well you ain't supposed to play on the lamp. You put a rope on the lamp and sit down and swing round to the lamp. If the police come along you'd run away. That was years ago.[21]

Another area of conflict between children and adult authority arose from playing football or cricket in the street. A game of street football was simple and quick to organise, all it took was a group of boys and a ball If they did not have a proper football, which was an expensive item, then an old tennis ball or even in the last resort, an old newspaper tied up with a piece of string would suffice. Almost

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[20] Interview with Harry B (b.1925) p8

[21] Interview With Violet (b.1925) p7

anywhere could be used as a pitch, and goal posts were instantly created with coats or jerseys. But again a keen eye had to be kept open for the local beat bobby. When he was seen approaching the cry of ***'copper'*** would go up and the boys would grab their clothes and run. Cricket was an even greater risk; a wicket would be chalked on a wall, and if a boy had a bat it would be shared by all, but any suitable piece of wood could be used. A cricket ball was a prized possession and would be used almost to destruction, but again, an old tennis ball, or even, as Emily recalled, a bar of Sunlight soap would do just as well.[22]

If a bat were not available any old stick would do (Picture c 1935 courtesy of CCHF)

Street cricket tended to be a cause of greater conflict with the adult world simply because of the ball's almost unerring propensity to find a window. While these seemingly innocent games could lead to conflict with adult authority other games were deliberately aimed at annoying adults. A favourite, remembered by most people, was Knock Down Ginger in which the children would knock on a door and run away. There were several variations on this old trick. One particularly novel adaptation used by the children that lived in a block of flats on the Albion Estate near the southern end of Tower Bridge was described by Dusty:

[22] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p 7

> Albion Estate was favourite for that, because all the doors were along there and all the railings were along there, and you could link the cotton from the knocker to the railing so that as they walked through they broke the cotton. Or you would tie the cotton from one knocker to the other so when one opened the door all the rest would come out because there knockers were going .Not very often though. [23]

Another variant of this game in a typical terraced street was to place two milk bottles onto neighbouring front windowsills. A cotton thread would then be tied across the doorways between two houses, then the bravest boy, or the fastest runner, would knock at the doors and run to a safe distance and wait. When the doors were opened the children would jeer at the householders in the hope that they would come out after them and cause the bottles to fall. Of course this trick could not be played too often, nor was it advisable to play it near home, as the consequences could be uncomfortable.

Some games could lead to much more serious conflict with adult authority in the shape of the local policeman but even here, as Ernest recalls, children would get their own back:

> Used to make a big rope whip with a bit of string on the end and when you flicked it. It used to make a loud cracking noise but if a policeman come along and see you and caught you he used to break it up and give you a clout round the ear hole. Or if he caught you playing cricket and he got too close to you, you didn't see him and he caught you you'd get a clout round the ear hole or a kick up the backside...so when we saw a copper coming along if we was out of the way we used to sling lumps of clay at him. We used to get some clay where they had been digging up the road make it into little balls and chuck it at the back of him so that it stuck on the back of his uniform made his uniform all mucky at the back.[24]

These attacks were not made in a random way. They were often targeted at particular adults thus a grumpy neighbour would often find his or, more often, her life made a misery by constant attacks from the local children. This could include repeated episodes of Knock Down Ginger or name calling and taunting in the street, always, of course, from a safe distance.

In some parts of London playing games in the street still carried the very real danger of arrest and prosecution. In 1930, for example, out of 331 cases appearing before the Lindsey Hall Juvenile Court at Notting Hill 123 (37%) were for playing games in the street.[25]At Islington, on the other hand, only 16.7% (37 out of 222) cases brought before the juvenile court were concerned with street games. The highest

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[23] Interview with Dusty (b.1927) p 16
[24] Interview With Earnest G (b.1927)
[25]PROHO45/15746 Reorganisation of Juvenile courts: Metropolitan Juvenile courts Statistics for the year 1930

percentage of cases dealt with in the Juvenile Courts, (relating to playing games in the streets) were to be found at the Battersea Juvenile Court, where almost 60% of the cases heard (109 out of 184) related to playing games in the street, while across the capital's eight Juvenile Courts as a whole no less than 35% of all the cases heard related to the playing of games in the street. After the 1933 Children Act there seems to have been a change in police policy. By 1935 the total number of prosecutions across the capital had halved from 638 in 1930 to just 346, and with increases in the amount of work undertaken by the Juvenile Courts these cases now made up just 9.4% of the cases heard.[26] Although some of these cases referred to the playing of football and cricket in the street, most seem to have been related to street gambling, and in particular the playing of pitch and toss by older children and adolescents. As Tom McCarthy recalled, these games took many different forms:

> It wasn't just the adults who gambled, we youngsters were at it too, we had our own games those which could be broken up quickly and which left no evidence if we were surprised by the police. For example, we would draw a line with chalk on the pavement, back off about ten feet or so and toss a coin as near as possible to the line The one nearest to the line at the end of the round won the money....A variation of that game which was more difficult was where you stood in the middle of the road and tried to toss the coin as near as you could to the little wall into which the railings in front of the houses were set... We called 'Up The Line' there was also 'Banger Out' where you threw coins against a wall...[27]

4.4 You Can Be in My Gang

One area of concern for adult authority, which, as Geoffrey Pearson points out, had been in evidence since fears about juvenile delinquency had first been expressed in the mid eighteenth century, was the formation of street gangs.[28] There had been numerous scare stories in the press during the First World War about gangs of young criminals running riot, but during the inter-war period these fears seem to have generally abated. Campaigners for the various youth movements, however, were still keen to stress the dangers posed by gangs of youths lounging about street corners with nothing to do. Hubert Secretan, for example, describes such a gang in his 1931 book *London Below the Bridges* in which he sets out the benefits of joining a boys' club to a working boy, and the dangers in letting such boys continue to roam the streets.[29] On the whole, however, it would seem that, apart from the odd isolated story, there were no mass

[26] PRO HO45/15746 Metropolitan Juvenile Court Statistics for the Year 1935
[27] Tom McCarthy, *Boysie* pp71-73
[28] Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (London 1983) pp 7-11
[29] Hubert Secretan, *London Below the Bridges; its Boys and its Future* (London 1931)

moral panics as there had been in the Victorian era about Hooligans and Cosh boys; or as there were to be in the post- war period with the Teddy Boys, and the later Mods and Rockers, Skinheads and Punks. But there is little doubt that gangs still existed during the inter-war period.

Stephen Humphries, in his book *Hooligans or Rebels,* identifies two types of gang; 'the delinquent gang, which inverted many of the values of respectable society, and the semi-delinquent gang, whose members drift in and out of delinquency in a casual manner.'[30] I believe that this is an over-simplification of the case. Certainly in London, during the inter-war years, there were delinquent gangs, usually of older adolescents who might engage in criminal or semi-criminal activities on a regular basis, like the one that Fred S belonged to; but most gangs seem simply to have been collections of friends or brothers and sisters who played together in the same streets. They did not, as Humphries suggests, set out to take revenge on a society that was depriving them of opportunity, but rather sought to have fun and enjoy themselves. Humphries also claims that most working-class boys became involved in street gangs at some time in their lives, normally between the ages of ten and thirteen.[31] This I would agree with, but would point out that gangs were not the exclusive preserve of either boys or the working class. One of the contributors to this project Frankie, for example, who by any standards must be considered to have been brought up in a middle-class family, describes forming a gang with her friends who played in the cemetery run by her father.[32]

Some gangs did get into trouble: Harry, for example, formed a small gang with three of his friends and armed themselves with air pistols and a revolver at the start of the Second World War to shoot any invading Germans, until they shot out a neighbour's window one evening while practising and ended up before the Juvenile Court.[33]

On the whole, however, gangs seem to have been a harmless form of play, rather than some form of conscious political statement. Most children do seem to have

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[30] Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels? An Oral History of Working-class Childhood and Youth 1889-1939.* (Oxford 1981) p179
[31] Ibid p 178
[32] Frankie has been excluded from the statistical studies that form part of this thesis because she falls outside its parameters coming as she did from an upper middle-class family.
[33] Interview with Harry (b.1927). p15

been members of gangs in one form or another, but most did not go on to become delinquent or even semi-delinquent.

I have also found evidence for the ritualised form of street gang battles as described by Humphries.[34] Fred J, for example, described the annual battle that took place across the Grand Union Canal between the children of Kensal Town and those of Kensal Green, during which both sides would take up sticks and throw stones across the canal, or meet to do battle on the bridge that joined the two areas. [35] But on the whole it would seem that, for most children, gang membership was simply another form of extended friendship and play, rather than a precursor to delinquency and criminal activity. I would argue that most acts of vandalism by children or gang members were accidental rather than deliberate. The breaking of a window, for example, was likely to be the result of an erratic kick during a game of football or someone hitting a six during a game of cricket rather than a malicious act.

4.5 The Devil finds Work for Idle Hands

Unsupervised and unregulated play, and especially the formation of street gangs, was seen as dangerous. It was felt that children, and adolescents in particular, who were left to roam and play in the streets would inevitably find their way into crime and end up as delinquents. These concerns about children running wild had first been raised in the mid nineteenth century, and had led to the formation of the Ragged and Sunday Schools movements and the creation of the Industrial and Reformatory schools. Such fears had also led to the formation of the Boys' Club Movement in the 1850s to provide wholesome recreation and education for young workers.

Such fears, together with a sharp rise in the levels of juvenile delinquency during the First World War, had led to the Home Office to establishing a Juvenile Organisation Committee (JOC) in 1917 to co-ordinate the work of the various youth organisations, as a way of directing young people's recreation. It was planned that this should be done through a network of local committees, which were to be comprised of representatives of the various organisations, the education authority, and a few worthy individuals who were interested in youth work. After the war the committee, together with its organising secretary, was transferred to the Board Of

[34] Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels?* pp 189-191.

Education (BOE) and they enthusiastically set about the task of organising the recreation of the nation's youth. All of this good work was brought to a grinding halt in 1922 when the Board of Education's JOC fell victim to the Geddes Axe. It was decided to allow the organising secretary Mr Clift (an Assistant Principal Secretary) to retire early and to put the committee into abeyance until the Board's financial situation improved. The Committee was resurrected in 1924 when Mr R S Ward who had been the Committee's administrative officer was instructed, amid renewed concerns about the activities of unemployed adolescents, to take over the post of organising secretary in addition to his other duties within the Board of Education. The aim was to co-ordinate the provision of recreation for the young, again through Local Committees. In particular, priority was to be given to providing activities for the young unemployed (those between 14-18). The local committees sought to co-ordinate the work of the various local youth organisations, both to ensure that young people were provided with a wide range of wholesome, healthy activities, and to promote cooperation between the various groups, and so reduce the demand for scarce supplies of equipment and accommodation.

The importance placed on the capital's juvenile organisation committees by the LCC can perhaps best be judged by the fact that in 1929 the Education Committee agreed a three year funding package, giving a grant of £1,000 a year over the following three years.[36] The1931 financial crisis, led however, to retrenchment. It was reported to the education committee that the grant to the London Joint Council of Juvenile Organisation Committees had been cut to £380 for the coming year and that one of the two organising secretary's posts had been terminated.[37] This was done, in spite of appeals from the BOE, to prevent the reduction in funding to the capital's JOCs, thereby protecting the work of a committee, which the Board held in high esteem describing its work as 'excellent'.[38] The council ignored these pleas and reduced the grant still further to £350 in 1933. It was not until 1934, once again in the face of concerns about rising youth unemployment and the need to provide recreational activates at youth training centres, that the Joint Council received an

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[35] See also Tom McCarthy, *Boysie* pp 41-46
[36] Minutes of The LCC Education Committee March 1929
[37] Minutes of The LCC Education Committee 9 March 1932
[38] PRO ED 136/638 Juvenile Organisation Committee Miscellaneous files

additional £270 as a emergency grant in addition to the £350 already agreed to help fund its work.[39]

A third attempt was made to resurrect the local committee system in 1936, when the Board of Education's Advisory Committee produced a report on the future role of the local committees. They proposed that local Joint Organisation Committees should:

a. Cover large areas usually Counties or County Boroughs in London. Each local Borough was to have its own JOC co-ordinated by a Joint council of JOCs
b. Each committee was to consist of:
i. Representatives appointed by the LEA
ii. The area officers of local youth organisations
iii. A few worthy men and women appointed on account of their special qualifications and experience.

All JOCs should have a full time paid organising secretary funded by the LEA, so as not to compete with local youth organisations for funds.[40]

In 1937 a new body, The National Council for Physical Training and Recreation, replaced the Board of Education Committee. The Council was provided with a budget of £2,000,000 to be spent over three years in funding capital projects such as the provision of sports equipment, the building and equipping of gymnasia, and the purchase of playing fields. The funds were to be administered through the local JOCs which were to continue in their old form. By March 1939 some 789 offers of grants had been made but, by the time war broke out in September, only £532,982 had actually been spent, of which £152,957 had gone on administration and salaries.[41]

This brings us to the question of who formed these local organisation committees. From the few records that remain on a local level they seem to have been composed of representatives from most of the main stream youth organisations like the Scouts, Guides, Boys' and Girls' Brigades, as well as representatives from various church based Boys' and Girls' Clubs, the Local Council and the LCC Education Committee.[42]

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[39] LCC Education Committee Minutes June 1934
[40] PRO ED 136/638 Juvenile Organisation Committee Miscellaneous files
[41] Peter C Malntosh, *Physical Education in England Since 1800* (London1968) p244
[42] It is interesting to note that there were representatives from the communities that these committees were supposed to help reflecting perhaps the paternal attitudes of the time.

So what effect did these groups have, were they successful in co-ordinating their efforts or were they just a talking shop? This is hard to judge, as the committees, although funded by the LCC acting as the Local Education Authority and including representatives of the authority, were separate from them and worked on a borough-by-borough basis coming together in a joint council. It has been impossible to find any records from the individual Borough Committees or for that matter from the London Joint Council. However, in the files of the Board of Education the work of the London committees is described as valuable and constructive.

Although this may be so, the JOCs, at least on a local level, did not prevent the poaching of members, as Fred S remembers:

> First of all I joined the Boys' Brigade playing the drums, then my brother joined this chapel and they wanted to get some more youngsters there. So they wanted to form a band. They asked my brother, because he could play the bugle, if he could form a band. So he was in Boys' Brigade, he left the Boys' Brigade said to me," will you leave the Boys' Brigade as well" and I did, and he formed the band I was just the solo drummer. [43]

While it is impossible to judge the influence of the capital's JOCs, the LCC, through its Education Committee, was making some practical contributions towards keeping children off the streets through its Play Centres. The Play Centre movement had been established in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century with the formation of the *Children's Happy Evenings Association* (1889), whose patron in 1914 was HM the Queen (Mary).[44] Their centres were run on very rigid lines with firm gender segregation. Only those children who were deemed by the organisers to be respectable and deserving were allowed to attend. Attendance at a play scheme session was seen as a reward for good schoolwork or regular attendance. The children had no say in when and where they were to attend, or to a large extent, in the activities in which they participated, but were told to report to a particular place at a particular time. The children's activities were also carefully controlled, with things like country and square dancing, ring games for younger children, suitable reading and various forms of craftwork being the predominant activities. [45]

It is perhaps appropriate to look for a moment at the motivations for introducing of these sorts of games and dancing into the play centre activities. It

[43] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) pp15-16 Fred was a member of the Gold Protestant Cadets no 147 coy of the London Cadet Force.
[44] PRO ED 65/13 Children's Happy Evenings Association
[45] Children's Happy Evenings Association annual report (1914)

would appear to reflect a desire on the part of the organisers to return the capitals urban working-class children to some long forgotten rural idol in which they could regain some of the sprit of Merry England. The idea seem to have been tied up in those various themes of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain that England was a rural rather than an urban society so that by introducing urban children to the simple delights of country and folk dancing they would in some way be able to imbue those children with some sense of national identity along with the ideas and attitudes of respect for their betters and duty to the state that had according to the myth so long been a part of rural society.[46] So influential did these ideas become that country dancing was taken up by the LCC and introduced into its elementary and latter primary school as part of the curriculum where it was to remain well into the 1960s complete with an annual inter schools competition to find the best county and folk dancers.

The Play Centre movement received a boost in 1917 when, as part of the emergency measures introduced to combat the sharp rise in juvenile delinquency, H.A.L Fisher, the new president of the Board of Education (see chapter 2), decided to provide funding in the form of a one off treasury grant backdated to 1916 to help support the work of the movement. It was payable to any organisation that was prepared to provide facilities and supervision of evening play centres. At the end of 1917 it was decided to extend the grant, making it a supplementary payment to the LEA grant, thus ensuring that it would become a regular annual payment. To ensure that only suitable organisations received the money, the board established a set of criteria to determine what constituted a Play Centre. These included the rules that they had to be open at least three times per week, and for at least 60 sessions a year and that no restrictions were to be placed on the children's attendance beyond those necessary for keeping good order.[47]

These criteria led to some conflicts between applicants and the board, for example, in the case of Archbishop Temple School in Lambeth which was a foundation grammar school for boys. The school ran an after school play scheme on two nights a week (Tuesdays & Thursdays) for selected boys, supervised by the head

[46] For a discussion of the development of country and folk dancing see Georgina Boyes, *The Imagined Village: Culture, Ideology and the English Folk Revival* (Manchester 1993) pp 94-146
[47] PRO ED 65/34 Play Centres General File

and two assistant masters, and it would seem mainly to have centred on playing football and cricket in the playground. The school applied for the grant in 1917, and there followed a lengthy correspondence between the headmaster, the BOE, and the LCC Education Committee as to whether or not the school qualified for the grant. The first problem was the number of weekly sessions: the board and council insisted that the school run three sessions a week, to which the school finally consented agreeing to run an extra session on Monday nights. Secondly, there was an argument over who should be allowed to attend. The school had been using the play scheme as a reward for good behaviour, attendance and schoolwork, but the BOE insisted that the centre be open to everyone, including boys from outside the school. Although this point was also conceded in theory, it seems likely that the school continued to restrict attendance to its own boys and to use the sessions as a reward for good conduct. There were continual arguments between the BOE and the school over its play scheme. It was found in 1919, for example, to have gone back to running the scheme on only two nights a week. Thus, after much correspondence, funding was withdrawn in 1921 and the centre officially closed,[48] although it would seem likely that the school continued to run after-school football and cricket practice for its own pupils.

The Board's rules for recognising play schemes also led to conflict with the Children's Happy Evenings Association which rejected the Board's rule that centres should be open to all, and which resented government interference in the running of what they seem to have believed was their own fiefdom. So fierce was the Association's opposition to the Board that in 1919, amidst howls of recrimination and complaint in the newspapers, they disbanded.

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[48] PRO ED/65 Archbishop Temple Play Centre

PLAY BY ORDER.

The Children's Happy Evenings Association "Crushed Out."

The work of organising games for children in the schools is no longer to be voluntary. The Children's Happy Evenings Association, which for 30 years has carried on the work, has decided to dissolve in view of the position taken up by the Board of Education that the work should be in the hands of the elementary teachers, and that it should be supported by a 40 per cent. grant from the Board, 40 per cent. from the L.C.C., and 20 per cent. by voluntary contributions.

The Board also make it a condition that any such play centres must take any child, from any school, and on every evening in the week. Asked if they wished the mentally deficient and the depraved child among the others, an official of the Board said that these were the children wanted most of all.

"The L.C.C.," said Lady Bland-Sutton, secretary of the Happy Evenings Association, "have throughout been sympathetic and courteous, but the Board of Education, by making our conditions impossible, have forced us to dissolve. We had tenancies in 98 schools, amusing over 80,000 children; we had 1,000 voluntary workers; we have done the work for 30 years, but now the Board has crushed us out, and we cannot go on."

The cost of a play centre under the Board of Education will be £850. The cost of Lady Bland-Sutton's whole organisation for a year was £750 13s. The association will hand over £1,000 to the L.C.C. Game[s] Fund.

EVENING PLAY CENTRES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—A resolution passed by the Children's Happy Evenings Association, at their final meeting last week, states that the Association are discontinuing their work—which has been suspended during the war—because the evening amusement of children is now "carried on and subsidized by the Educational Authorities." The reference is clearly to the play centres, now spreading over the country. May I point out that in the case of London, at any rate, which is the headquarters of the movement, where the largest group of play centres exists, where also the main activities of the C.H.E.A. lay before the war, this is an inaccurate statement? The 31 play centres in London, dealing with some 30,000 to 40,000 children, are not "carried on" by the Educational Authority, but by the Evening Play Centres Committee, which is a purely voluntary body, depending upon a voluntary fund, plus a Government grant dating from last year. No play centre in London that I know of is "carried on" by the Authority. And no subsidy is given by the Education Authority to any play centre existing before the quite recent resolution passed by the L.C.C. Twenty-nine out of our 31 centres receive no subsidy, and but for the voluntary fund could not be maintained. It is most important to the happiness of thousands of children that this fund should be kept up. I protest, therefore, with some energy against a statement which may do harm to the very cause which the C.H.E.A. were, I think, founded to support.

Yours obediently,
MARY A. WARD, Chairman of the Evening Play Centres Committee.

Play by order The Daily News Saturday 1st March 1919
Evening Play Centres Times letters Wednesday 5th March 1919

What sorts of activities did these Play Centres offer? Some, like the Clayton Street Play Centre, which was run by the Browning Settlement at King & Queen St School Walworth SE17, were actually Junior Boys' Clubs. The members of the Clayton St Club, who were all under 14, went on to the Excelsior Boys' club, which was also run by the Browning Settlement. A letter dated 17-03-1917, which was submitted to the Board in support of their grant application, details the activities offered by the centre:

> "During the winter months the lads are provided with many kinds of games Draughts, Dominoes, race games, puzzles, pin boards, parlour quoits, card games, solitaire, etc. One room is kept for round games, singing, blindfold and competition games. Good use is made of boxing gloves, punching ball , wrestling mat, climbing rope etc. with tug of war, running drill and the like. During the summer months the school and playground are used on Tuesdays and Thursdays for cricket, drill, running, drum and fife band practice. On Saturday afternoons, when possible, football or cricket is played in Brockwell Park. (6 miles away) Camps are also held in the country at Easter and in August. Last August 66 boys were in camp." [49]

[49] PRO ED 65/22 Clayton St Play Centre

The club stressed the point that discipline was maintained "Without any military method.... more permanently than in many Boy Scout Troops". [50] This was, as will be shown below, a clear reference to the general anti-militarism and especially the hostility of many working-class parents towards, what they perceived to be, militaristic youth organisations which were prevalent at this time.

Although the club was in a school building the Board of Education said that it was in effect a Junior Boys' Club and refused at first to give it grant aid under the Play Centre regulations, but after some correspondence this decision was reversed.
How successful was this and other centres? In 1931 the superintendent claimed in his grant application that in the winter months over 100 boys regularly attended, but official recognition was withdrawn in 1935 after the Board failed to get a reply to its correspondence. Eventually the LCC confirmed that the centre had been closed for over a year. Most play centres, however, were run by the schools with teachers acting as supervisors, but no matter what sort of centre it was, there was always strict segregation of boys and girls, as the following recommended schemes of activities taken from regulations show.

Boys and Girls on Separate nights

Monday Boys:-	Drill, gymnastics, organised games Painting Quiet room Toy-room for the little ones (note these were mixed under 7s) Room for every night, girls Books, knitting etc
Tuesday Girls:-	Dancing and singing games Painting Needlework, knitting, and books Toy-room for little ones Room for every night, boys quite games and books
Wednesday Girls:-	Dancing and singing games Painting and Chalking Fairy stories and acting Toy-room for little ones Room for every night, boys Chalking and Plasticine
Thursday Boys:-	Drill, gymnastics, and organised games Cobbling Painting Quiet games Toy-room for the little ones Room for every night, girls singing and acting
Friday Girls:-	Dancing and singing games

[50] Ibid.

Basketwork and raffia
Painting
Needlework knitting and rug making
Toy-room for the little ones
Room for every night, boys quiet games and books [51]

While some of the activities recommended are clearly gender neutral, like painting and chalking, there is a clearly defined gender difference between most of the activities recommended for boys and girls. Girls were expected to develop craft skills like raffia work, basket and rug making and knitting- useful for providing for a large family- while boys on the other hand were taught to cobble; girls were encouraged to sing, dance and act, boys were expected to drill and perform gymnastics, thus reinforcing the gender roles of boys and girls

How successful were these centres in attracting members? Out of all of those interviewed for this study nobody remembered attending an organised Play Centre. One man remembered playing football in the playground which was left open for a couple of hours after the school had closed. It is hardly surprising that nobody in the study remembers attending a play centre, for although most of the play centres reported attendances ranging from twenty or thirty to well over a hundred,[52] there were never more than a few play centres across the capital catering for only a tiny minority of the city's children. In February 1928, for example, it was reported to the Education Committee that there were 34 evening play centres providing accommodation for some 12,000 children per session, and that it was proposed to run 20 vacation play schemes providing accommodation for about 10,000 children. [53] This for a school aged population of just over three quarters of a million children [54] To make matters worse, most of the centres that did exist seem to have been in the respectable upper- working and lower middle-class district rather than in the poorer rougher district like Clayton Street where, it might be argued, there was the greatest need.

4.6 Always be prepared: The formation of formal youth organisations

[51]Proposed activities for play centres PRO ED 65/35 Play Centre General file
[52] PRO ED 65/ 36 Play Centres General File
[53] LCC Education Committee minutes 13 February 1928
[54] According to the LCC statistics for the year 1927-8 there were 766,860 children on the authorities school role.

By the end of the First World War all of the main youth groups that we know today had come into existence. The Boys' Club movement had been formed as far back as the 1850s while the various brigades starting with William Smith's Boys' Brigade in 1883 followed by the Church Lads' Brigade (1891) the Jewish Lads' Brigade (1896), Catholic Lads' Brigade (1896) and even the non-military Boys' Life Brigade (1899) had all been formed during the last decades of the nineteenth century. At the same time the Girls' Brigade was started in Dublin (1892) and the Girls' Life Brigade in England (1902) while a sister organisation to the Boys' Brigade, the Girls' Guildry was formed in Scotland in 1900. These organisations were formed to meet the demands of the sisters of the various Boys' Brigade members to have their own organisations. Baden Powell launched his Scouts on the World in 1908, soon to be followed in 1910 by the Girl Guides.

All of these groups had originally been aimed at older working children (12+), but by the end of the Great War most had junior sections. Baden Powell had introduced the Wolf Cubs in 1916 to formalise the practice that many Scoutmasters had already established of running unofficial junior sections. The Boys' Brigade had followed suit and introduced the Reserves in 1917.which were to become the Life Boys after the merger of the Boys' Brigade and Boys' Life Brigade in 1926. The Guides had introduced a junior section for girls aged 8 to 11 in 1914 originally called The Rosebuds they soon became known as the Brownies because of the colour of their uniforms. Thus, by the end of the Great War, there were organised activities for girls and boys from 7 to 18 and beyond.

The Boys' Brigades and the Scouts had come into their own during the war; whole platoons and companies of ex-Scouts and Boys' Brigade members had been formed and sent to the western front. Scouts acted as messengers at home, while the Boys Brigade had gone even further, establishing two canteens for the troops, run and staffed by Brigade members behind the frontlines in France.[55]

The pro-military pro-government stance that Baden Powell and the Scouts adopted during the First World War caused considerable disenchantment amongst the many left wing and pacifist Scoutmasters which in turn led to the formation of a variety of breakaway groups. These included, the Order of Woodcraft Chivalry

[55] Austin Edward Birch, *The Story of the Boys' Brigade* (London 1965) p51

(1915), the 'Kibbo Kift, the Woodcraft Kindred' (1920) and the Woodcraft Folk (1925) which continues today as an independent auxiliary of the Co-operative Education Movement.

After a marked rise in membership on the outbreak of war in 1914, both the Scouts and Boys' Brigade saw a steady decline in numbers throughout the war years; this was partly due to a lack of suitable leaders as Scoutmasters and Boys' Brigade officers joined the forces, but also because there was a rise in anti-military feeling amongst the civilian population. Parents began to see the uniformed youth organisations, with their emphasis on military drill, as training grounds for the army especially as more and more former members marched off to war:

> The Boys' Brigade captain he was a gentleman and he took the part of the boys a lot of them were rogues and went to police courts with them he paid all that boys they started at the age of eight and at 18 just before they went into the war they all went there and said goodbye to the captain oh and he was upset my boys when he had brought them up to that way of life.[56]

After the war membership soon recovered, with membership of the Boys' Brigade reaching a peak in 1933 when the organisation celebrated its Jubilee.

Although the Scouts and Boys' Brigade grew in the post war period, the same cannot be said for the various Cadet Forces. At their height in 1921 there were 2,318 Cadet Corps with a membership of 119,706 but by the outbreak of war in 1939 the numbers had fallen to around 20,000.[57]

Who were the members of these organisations and why did they join? Out of those interviewed for this thesis 9 of the men and 7 of the women said that they had been members of one or other of the uniformed youth organisations. In other words 16 out of the 31 people interviewed, or just over half, said that they had been members.

When asked why they joined most of the contributors said that it was because their friends or siblings were members. Two of the women interviewed said that, while their brothers were members of the Boys' Brigade, their mothers would not let them join the Girls' Guildry or Girl Guides because they did not think that such organisations were suitable for girls.

Of those that were members, most came from the better class of home with parents who could afford to buy the uniform. (Although one contributor said that her elder sister, who was working, had bought her uniform). These findings support those

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[56] Interview with Amy (b.1908) p6

of other authors like John Springhall and Stephen Humphries that, despite being aimed at the poorer members of the working-class, the uniformed youth movements tended to appeal more to the upper working and lower middle classes. In some areas it seems to have been positively dangerous to wear a Scout uniform in public, Louis Heren recalled in his autobiography that, although he was a member of the 2nd City of London Sea Scout troop, he could not wear his uniform near his Shadwell home for fear of the abuse that he would receive from the other boys:

> The Sea Scout uniform was in fact very practical, comfortable and quite smart-A round sailor cap, navy blue jersey with the legend *Sea Scouts* embroidered in white across the chest a blue and white neckerchief and blue shorts- but we rarely wore it because of the neighbourhoods in which we lived. Such a get-up aroused ridicule and sly humour [58]

The rougher boys, if they belonged to any organisation at all, tended to gravitate towards the Boys' Clubs. Three contributors (all from rough areas) said that they were members of Boys' Clubs where they learned to box rather than any of the uniformed organisations.

The Youth Clubs and more especially the Boys' and Girls' clubs were keen to promote sport both as a means of burning up surplus energy and as a way of fostering health and fitness among their young city bred members. They therefore offered a range of sporting activities including football, cricket, gymnastics and boxing for the boys, while the girls played rounders and netball or did gymnastics, and Swedish drill. These clubs offered a range of other facilities including ping pong tables and in the boys' clubs billiard and snooker tables, while, for both boys and girls, libraries of wholesome books and quiet reading rooms were provided. Some clubs also provided facilities to pursue hobbies like stamp collecting or model making.

Most Boys' and Girls' clubs catered for the need of older working-class adolescents many having lower age limits of 14, although some did have Junior Sections which might meet once or twice a week before the main club began. These clubs normally had a full-time paid adult superintendent, but were nominally run by the older members who formed committees and elected officers to supervise all aspects of the clubs day to day activities.[59]

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[57] For a detailed description of the membership structure and activities of the various uniformed youth organisations see John Springhall, *Youth Empire and Society 1883-1940* (London 1977)
[58] Louis Heren, *Growing up poor in London* (London 1973) p115
[59] See Charles E B Russell & Lillian M Russell, *Lads' Clubs; Their History Organisation and Management* (London 1932) for a description of the organisation and structure of a Boys' Club.

Whatever type of club or organisation children belonged to, they all seem to have had one common denominator: this was a link with religion in some form or another. All of the uniformed youth organisations were affiliated to a religious body. Most scout troops seem to have been attached to the Church of England while the various Boys' and Girls' Brigades were attached to the Baptist or Methodist church's, while in East London The Jewish Lads' Brigade was very active. Most of the Boys' Clubs were also associated in one form or another with the church, many of them having originated in the Settlement Movement of the latter half of the nineteenth century. That had been sparked by the missionary zeal of the Evangelicals within the Church of England. Local missions, normally under the supervision of a young curate or minister, would hold regular weekly meetings, encouraging children to attend with slide and film shows, forming sports teams and, as will be discussed below, holding out the promise of a free day trip to the seaside or a Christmas party. Both Angela Roadway and Tom McCarthy recalled the film shows at the Methodist Hall Drayton Park organised by one Donald Soper.[60]

Other religious based activities that most children in poorer districts seem to have attended were the weekly "Band of Hope' meetings at which they would be encouraged to swear abstinence from the demon drink and sign the pledge. As with other missions, the children would be tempted in by the chance to watch a slide show or a film, and the promise of a day out in the summer and a party at Christmas.

At school, the Board of Education rule 136 laid down that 'a minimum of 60 minutes a week shall be devoted to instruction in physical exercise (PE) by senior departments of ordinary elementary schools'.[61] While, in July 1927, the LCC Education Committee recommended that where practicable 100 minutes a week should be spent on PE in elementary schools.[62] It is interesting to note that the Committee specifically excluded central schools from this recommendation. Physical training was, like so many other aspects of children's lives at this time, very gender specific, with boys being encouraged to take part in manly sports like football, rugby and cricket as well as Swedish drill (the forerunner to gymnastics) and athletics, while girls were offered netball, rounders and hockey. As part of their PE lessons it would

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[60] Angela Rodaway,*A London Childhood* (London 19600 p 60 & Tom McCarthy, *Boysie* (London 1986) p67

[61]Minutes of the LCC Education Committee July 1927.

seem that almost all schools included swimming- most of the contributors said that they learnt to swim at school. Many schools had sports teams that would take part in the inter-school contests that were run both by the LCC and the Local Borough Councils. Some schools, particularly those in the rougher areas, also offered after-school boxing training for their boys, with school contests to find the school champion who might then go on to represent the school in the schoolboy contests organised by the Amateur Boxing Association.[63]

4.7 We're all Going on a Summer Holiday

Many people, like Rose Lowe, remember with fondness days out to the countryside to places like Loughton in Essex, or, as she called it, Lousy Loughton, where she would spend her pennies on 'a tu'ppeny bottle of scent for mum and a few sticks of rock for younger brothers and sisters left at home'.[64] For most of London's poorer working-class children a holiday meant a trip to the seaside at Southend. Many of these trips were organised by the local Sunday school or Mission and so, as Fred M remembers, it was vital to make sure that you collected your weekly ticket to prove that you had attended regularly, and so earned the right to a place on the outing:

> This place where you used to go over Stepney Green, save so many tickets and they used to take you to Southend for the day. So what we used to do, say we missed a couple of Sundays or Saturdays, 'Oh there going to Southend next Saturday' So my brother would say, 'what' I say 'we ain't got enough tickets' 'soon will have by the time the day' 'Give us your f***ing tickets or else' he used to fight anybody and give them a really good hiding he wasn't afraid of no one he was a bastard. [65]

In those days, before the introduction of holidays with pay, the chance of a longer holiday away from the capital for a working-class child would often depend on the work of various charitable organisations, like the Children's Country Holiday Fund (CCHF) which was founded in 1884 by the Rev Samuel Barnett and his wife Henrietta who, by combining the work of the various small local charitable groups, formed 'The Country Holiday Fund to Provide Fresh Air for Ailing Children.' It was soon decided that this name was far to cumbersome and so in 1886 it was shortened to the Children's Country Holiday Fund (CCHF).

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Boxing had to be run as an after school activity because it had been banned as a school sport by the LCC Education Committee as it was felt to be dangerous.
[64] Rose Lowe, *Daddy Burtts for Dinner: Growing up in Hoxton Between the Wars* (1976) P 26
[65] Interview with Fred M (b.1928) p4

As can be seen from Table 4.1 and Figure 4.2, the number of children sent away each year grew rapidly, so that at its height in 1912 the charity sent more than 46,000 children away for two weeks either in the country or beside the sea. Although the events of the First World War seriously hampering its activities they did not extinguish the charity's work for, unlike other organisations, the CCHF continued to send the capital's most needy children out of the city for a summer break throughout the war years.

Although the organisation was never again to reach the dizzy heights of sending 46,000 children away in a single year, by the end of the twenties around 30,000 children a year were benefiting from a CCHF holiday. The recession of the early 1930s saw a dip in numbers, but by 1934 numbers had recovered

Table 4.1 Number of Children Sent Away Each Year 1899-1939

Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number	Year	Number
1884	4600	1898	31970	1912	46402	1926	27102
1885	6800	1899	22709	1913	45602	1927	28897
1886	11800	1900	31730	1914	22902	1928	32631
1887	14048	1901	34259	1915	15955	1929	32348
1888	17637	1902	20456	1916	17264	1930	30681
1889	20772	1903	34427	1917	14000	1931	29085
1890	17000	1904	39750	1918	15358	1932	23616
1891	23771	1905	38510	1919	23949	1933	28832
1892	25568	1905	43442	1920	23742	1934	32577
1893	28589	1907	41790	1921	16438	1935	33477
1894	28026	1908	42510	1922	22728	1936	33919
1895	28783	1909	43582	1923	25734	1937	28402
1895	30224	1910	45980	1924	26200	1938	28627
1897	21412	1911	45174	1925	26092	1939	27619

Figures taken from the Children's Country Holiday Fund Archives

How was the Charity organised? Like most late Victorian charitable endeavours the CCHF was a very socially structured body. The Executive Committee, for example, included the Earl of Arran as honorary treasurer and vice-president as well as two Countesses, two Ladies, a Justice of the Peace, a reverend, and a full Colonel among its 24 members. The organisation also claimed the Patronage of HRH Elizabeth, Duchess of York who was of course destined to become HM the Queen and subsequently the Queen Mother, and who was to remain the Society's Patron until her death in 2002. The Society included among its vice-presidents, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the Bishops of London and Winchester, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, as well as such notable women as Dr Scott Lidgett, Lady

Chamberlain and Lady Baden-Powell, while the 1934 Appeals Committee looks like a page from *Who's Who*. As with many such organisations, the CCHF was seen as a suitable activity for the wives and daughters of the rich and famous. At the local level too it was the wives and daughters of the middle classes who made up the bulk of the committee members. There were two types of local committee, the Town Committee and the Country Committee. As the names imply, these were formed in the capital and the areas to which children were to be sent. In London it was often the case that the members of the local CCHF committee would also be members of the School Care Committees (see Chapter 3), and it seems likely that children who attended schools that were fortunate enough to have members who sat on both committees were more likely to get the chance of a holiday than those who did not.

So who selected the children to be sent away? In order for a child to be sent away on holiday, they first had to be recommended either by a local committee member or, more usually, by the head teacher of their school. At the beginning of each year the local town committee would appoint a lady school visitor who would then circulate all of the elementary schools in her area (see Fig 4.3) asking for the head teacher's nomination of needy children to be sent away.

LETTER D.

Children's Country Holidays Fund.

Countryside Committee:

Chairman—Dame HENRIETTA BARNETT, D.B.E.

Joint Hon. Secretaries { Mrs. DOUGLAS WILSON, 17 Buckley Road, N.W.6.
Miss STERN, 33A St. John's Park, Blackheath, S.E.3.

TO THE HEAD TEACHERS.

DEAR SIR, or MADAM, 1931.

The Countryside Committee is sending you four copies of the Letter to the children who will go to the country this summer through the Children's Country Holidays Fund.

The little booklet-letter describes in simple words the many interesting things that the children can observe for themselves in the country or at the seaside, in July and August. The Committee is assured that the encouragement thus given them to use their eyes and ears not only makes their holiday happier and gives them many pleasant memories to carry away with them, but also helps in no small measure to keep them out of the mischief into which idle hands and unguided activities so easily fall.

The Committee gratefully acknowledges all the help that you have so freely given in the past, to which much of the success of the work is due, and asks once more that you will kindly allow the Letter to be read to the children by their teachers, a few pages at a time; or, if possible, that you will arrange that it should be used as a reading or nature study lesson in class. The copies for the children who will be going away will be sent to the Hon. Sec. of your Children's Country Holidays Fund Local Committee for distribution to the children before the holidays.

The Countryside Committee hopes that every child who goes to the country through the Fund will write a letter on his (or her) return to school, describing some of the things that he has observed for himself, and asking questions about other things that puzzle him. Please send us *all* the letters (even if some of them are ill-spelt, ill-written and blotted), drawings or paintings made in the country from natural objects and collections of wild flowers, grasses, and sea-shore specimens.

The points which count when the letters are judged are those which show that the child has made good use of individual powers of thought and observation while in the country.

There is **no competition.** Every letter, drawing, or collection placed in Class I or Class II is eligible for a prize.

The children whose work is placed in Class I will be invited to a tea-party in May to receive their prizes.

A mounted picture is sent through the teachers to each child whose work is placed in Class II.

A number of large, framed, beautiful paintings are awarded as Trophies to the Schools sending in the best work collectively, to be held for one year. No trophy may be held for 2 consecutive years.

There is a Special Prize for both boys and girls for the best Drawing, and the best Collection sent in, from all the Schools. Each of these prizes gains one of the above Trophies to be held by the School for one year.

All the children's drawings and paintings are judged by Artists on the Committee.

Looking forward to your helpful co-operation.

I am, dear Sir or Madam, yours truly,

HENRIETTA O. BARNETT.

Signed on behalf of the Countryside Committee. [P.T.O.

Figure 4.3 CCHF letter to head teachers requesting nominations

Once the nominations had been received, the Home Visiting Officer, who was often also a Care Committee visitor, would be asked to visit the homes of the selected children. These home visits were aimed at providing information about the family circumstances of the child, for example; were they clean, were there any relatives in the country to which the child could be sent, and most importantly, were the parents able to contribute towards the cost of the holiday. Unlike other charities, the CCHF did not provide free holidays; although in a few special cases and in some of the

poorest districts the Care Committee might defray the cost, in all other cases children, or rather their parents, were expected to contribute towards the cost of the holiday:

> They used to run a holiday. You paid, all according to your circumstances. My mother always paid 12/6- a week some paid 4/6d but then you go to the country and you go there for two weeks.[66]

It was the job of the school visitor to arrange for the collection of the children's pennies and threepences each week. Of course these payments did not cover the whole cost of a holiday, but it was felt that if the families did not contribute they would not appreciate the holiday. It was also recognised that, by charging for the holidays, the organisation was able to circumvent that great working class stigma of receiving charity, because it could not be called charity if you were paying for it now could it?

So how were the holidays funded? The wealthy patrons held fund raising events like the charity Tableaux Matinee held at the Court Theatre in 1922, when wealthy ladies dressed up to recreate some of the most famous scenes from art and literature. Famous actors and actresses also supported the charity, putting on special performances like the one given by Gertrude Lawrence and friends at the Palladium in 1933. There were also regular annual appeals in the press. The Daily Mirror, for example, included a CCHF appeal in its Pip and Squeak Cartoons (see Figure 4.4)

[66] Interview with Alice W(b 1915) p7

Thank you, everybody, for your kind birthday

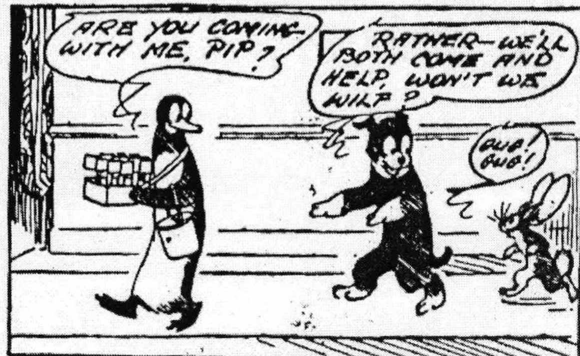
Uncle Dick.

holiday

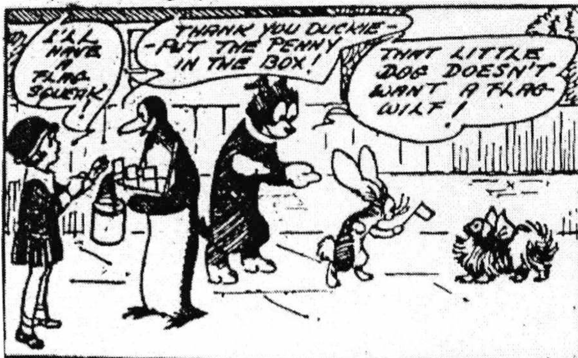
The organisation

SQUEAK'S "FLAG DAY" FOR PETS' HOLIDAY FUND.

1. Squeak decided to have a little flag day of her own to collect money—



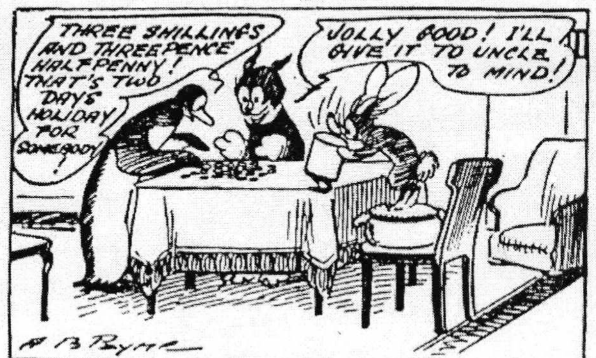
2.—for the Pip and Squeak Holiday Fund, which will provide holidays for poor boys and girls.



3. Wilfred tried to sell a flag to a little dog! They were soon very busy.

4. One very kind old gentleman gave them sixpence. Squeak was very pleased.

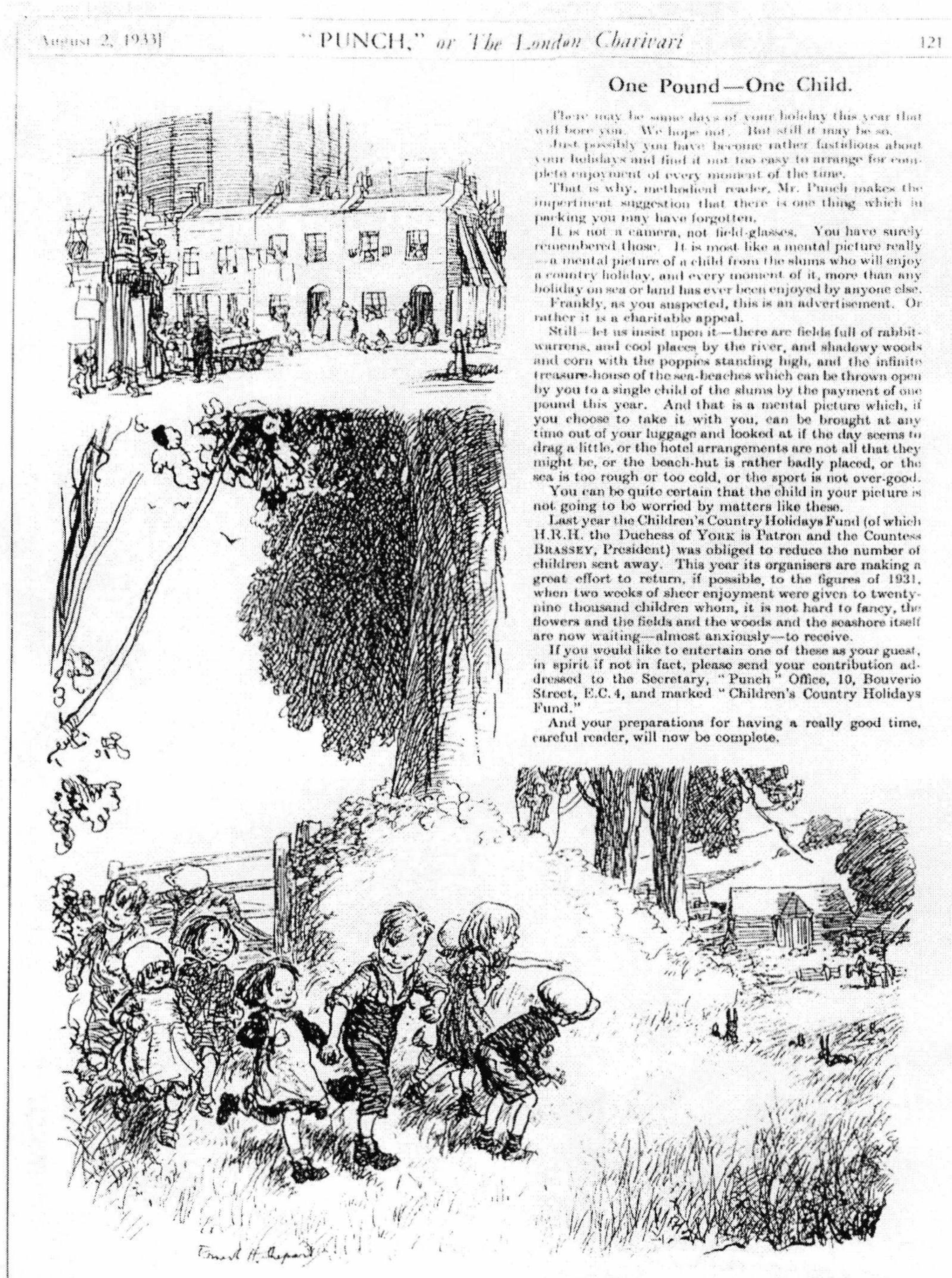
. "The box feels ever so heavy!" said Pip, as they hurried back home.



6. Have you got some pennies to spare for the Pip and Squeak Holiday Fund?

Figure 4..4 Pip and Squeak carton appeal *Daily Mirror* May 1924

The Society's activities were also regularly pictured in the illustrations of *Punch* (Figure 4.5)



August 2, 1933] "PUNCH," or The London Charivari 121

One Pound—One Child.

There may be some days of your holiday this year that will bore you. We hope not. But still it may be so.

Just possibly you have become rather fastidious about your holidays and find it not too easy to arrange for complete enjoyment of every moment of the time.

That is why, methodical reader, Mr. Punch makes the impertinent suggestion that there is one thing which in packing you may have forgotten.

It is not a camera, not field-glasses. You have surely remembered those. It is most like a mental picture really—a mental picture of a child from the slums who will enjoy a country holiday, and every moment of it, more than any holiday on sea or land has ever been enjoyed by anyone else.

Frankly, as you suspected, this is an advertisement. Or rather it is a charitable appeal.

Still—let us insist upon it—there are fields full of rabbit-warrens, and cool places by the river, and shadowy woods and corn with the poppies standing high, and the infinite treasure-house of the sea-beaches which can be thrown open by you to a single child of the slums by the payment of one pound this year. And that is a mental picture which, if you choose to take it with you, can be brought at any time out of your luggage and looked at if the day seems to drag a little, or the hotel arrangements are not all that they might be, or the beach-hut is rather badly placed, or the sea is too rough or too cold, or the sport is not over-good.

You can be quite certain that the child in your picture is not going to be worried by matters like these.

Last year the Children's Country Holidays Fund (of which H.R.H. the Duchess of YORK is Patron and the Countess BRASSEY, President) was obliged to reduce the number of children sent away. This year its organisers are making a great effort to return, if possible, to the figures of 1931, when two weeks of sheer enjoyment were given to twenty-nine thousand children whom, it is not hard to fancy, the flowers and the fields and the woods and the seashore itself are now waiting—almost anxiously—to receive.

If you would like to entertain one of these as your guest, in spirit if not in fact, please send your contribution addressed to the Secretary, "Punch" Office, 10, Bouverie Street, E.C.4, and marked "Children's Country Holidays Fund."

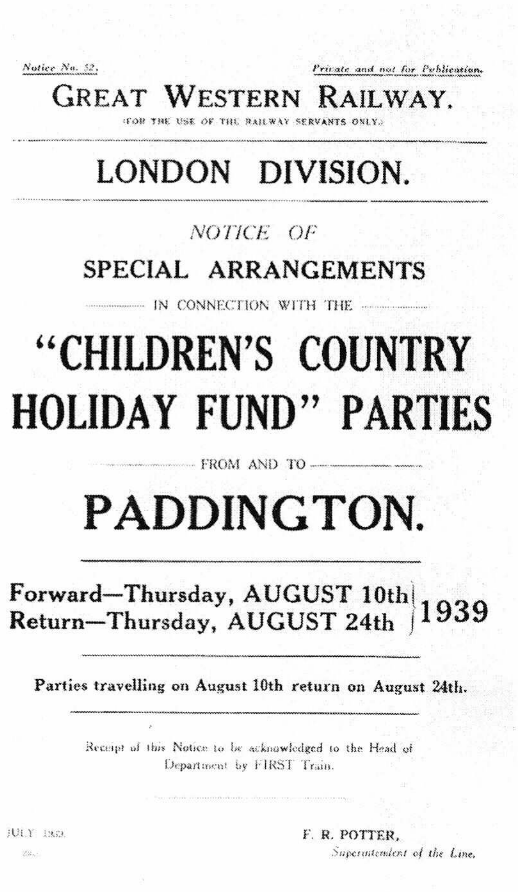
And your preparations for having a really good time, careful reader, will now be complete.

Figure 4.5 *Punch* illustration appeal August 1933

Celebrities like A.A Milne (Author of 'Winnie the Pooh') wrote fund raising letters to the *Times*; his letter of 1932 raised £3,466 and the one the following year

raised £2,399. The Society also embraced the new medium of radio, with an appeal by Seymour Hicks in 1935 and by Uncle Mac on Children's Hour in 1936.

As well as raising funds through Society events and the media, the CCHF was also able to negotiate special rates with the railway companies, who were even prepared to lay on special trains and time tables.(see Figure 4.6) These contacts were to prove particularly useful when, in 1939, the charity was asked to help co-ordinate the evacuation of London's children at the start of the Second World War.



Notice No. 52. *Private and not for Publication.*

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.

(FOR THE USE OF THE RAILWAY SERVANTS ONLY.)

LONDON DIVISION.

NOTICE OF

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

IN CONNECTION WITH THE

"CHILDREN'S COUNTRY HOLIDAY FUND" PARTIES

FROM AND TO

PADDINGTON.

Forward—Thursday, AUGUST 10th
Return—Thursday, AUGUST 24th } **1939**

Parties travelling on August 10th return on August 24th.

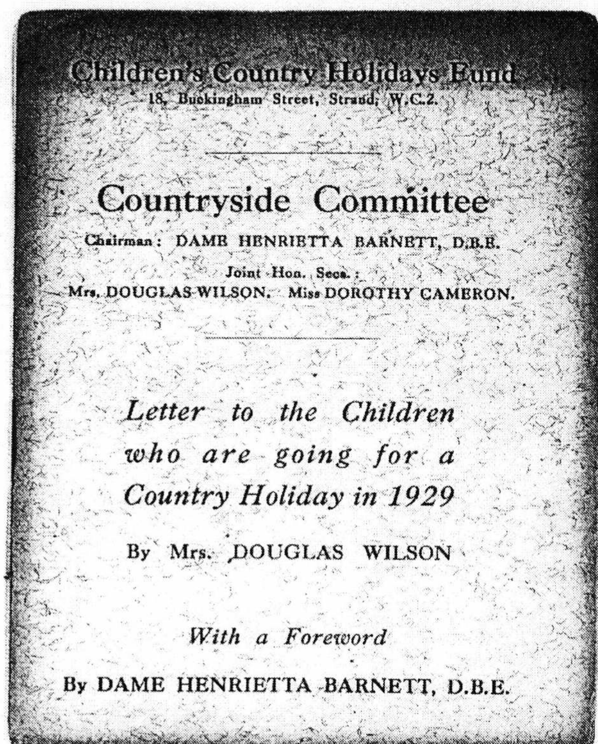
Receipt of this Notice to be acknowledged to the Head of Department by FIRST Train.

F. R. POTTER,
Superintendent of the Line.

Figure 4.6 Special Timetable for CCHF trains August 1939

Where did the children stay and what did they do on their holiday? Generally, the children went to stay in ordinary homes. The householders, who were known as cottagers, were paid for each child they took in (in 1920, 5/- per week). In some areas the children were housed together in dormitories but this was found to be more expensive. The children were sent all over the southeast of England. The Society operated within a fifty-mile radius of the capital so a child might find itself staying in a farm cottage in Buckinghamshire or a seaside boarding house at Bognor Regis depending on what space was available. The children were not to be allowed to waste

their time on holiday but were expected to take part in healthy outdoor pursuits and activities. In 1929 the Society introduced lantern slide lectures to prepare the children for their holidays, and they were also provided with an instruction book telling them what to expect and setting them tasks to perform while they were away (Figure 4.7).



Children's Country Holidays Fund
18, Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C.2.

Countryside Committee
Chairman: DAME HENRIETTA BARNETT, D.B.E.
Joint Hon. Secs.:
Mrs. DOUGLAS WILSON. Miss DOROTHY CAMERON.

Letter to the Children who are going for a Country Holiday in 1929

By Mrs. DOUGLAS WILSON

With a Foreword

By DAME HENRIETTA BARNETT, D.B.E.

Figure 4.7 CCHF Letter to Children 1929

The children were expected to write stories and produce pictures about their experiences while they were away which they were encouraged to submit to the Society as part of a contest. Before the First World War Henrietta Barnett had designed a questionnaire for children returning from holidays, asking about the things they had seen and done and these were still in use in some areas in the 1930s.
Who went on a CCHF holiday? According to the charity they provided holidays for needy children. Recognising the large number of poor Jewish children in the East End, they established a Jewish Branch in 1888. In fact the Fund organisers were fairly selective; the children had to be clean, reasonably dressed, fit and health. All children going on a CCHF holiday had to produce a medical certificate to prove this, and were inspected by a nurse before they left. Often it would seem that the school doctor and nurse were called upon to conduct these inspections. To make sure that they had clean heads, both boys and girls were required to have their hair cut short. Children who

were disruptive or disobedient could be, and were, sent home. Although the charity claimed to send only respectable needy children away, there is evidence that sometimes other children could slip through the net. There is some evidence in the Society's records, for example, that before the First World War some very poor children were loaned clothes and especially boots by the area committees to enable them to go. There is also evidence that not all the children that went on CCHF holidays were needy. For example, one of the contributors to this project, Frankie, was the daughter of a cemetery superintendent.[67] The family employed two maids and a gardener and so could not be described as having been needy, yet this lady clearly recalls going on a CCHF holiday and not just for the standard two weeks; she seems to have been away for about a month. How was this possible? Each committee member was allowed to nominate a child for a holiday, and in Frankie's case one of the local priests who used the cemetery run by her father nominated her. But for most of the children who were sent away, like Alice B, the CCHF provided their only childhood holiday experience, and the memories have stayed with them all their lives:

> We really looked forward to that. We always stayed with somebody that wanted you to be there and probably they had a farm or something like that and you know for us that was really lovely. And what my sister and I used to do as soon as you got there they'd show you your room and you'd take your cases up and we'd want to find out where the cemetery was and if there was a baby's grave with no flowers on. We used to take the flowers from somebody else's grave and put them on that grave and that was our first run but it was lovely holidays.[68]

For some children holidays meant work. Many children, especially those from the East End, found themselves every September uprooted with their whole family from the grimy London back streets and transplanted to the hop fields of Kent where they might stay for anything up six weeks, much to the frustration of their schoolteachers. This annual migration was one of the highlights of the year for many of London's working-class children such as Dorothy. Her family went to a farm near the town of Cranbrook in Kent. As she recalled it was quite an operation to move whole families:

> We used to get there and there was a big brick hut. Some people only had tents but we had a brick hut and there was a bed there all made out of wood and my mum would take her own mattress fill it up with straw mattress cover, and I loved it you know. There'd be four of us in that bed, and me brother in a bed chair at the side. Be up at 6 o'clock if it wasn't raining you go out in the fields and mum would be pulling all the vines down and we was supposed to be

[67] Interview with Frankie not transcribed
[68] Interview with Alice W (b.1915) p7

picking hops but I picked some and it made your hand smell and I didn't want to do it and I never ever picked again[69]

Generally father would be left at home as he had to go to work, but he would make the trip down to the countryside at the weekend and spend Saturday night in the village pub. Four of the contributors to this project recalled going 'hopping', all of whom came from the East End.[70] The annual 'hopping' pilgrimage was not just a way of getting a cheap holiday, for, as Margaret recalled, even the youngest children were expected to work:

> Hop picking .We went hop picking right from when I was a few months old right up until I was twenty odd went hop picking but then it was you were told either you picked in the morning and you played in the afternoon or the other way round but you had to pick at least four hours every day. Don't matter how small you were you picked on that bin because the money they got from that what we fetched home was what got us through till Christmas and for our Christmas.[71]

Families would travel down, either by lorry or by the 'Hopper Specials' that were run by the Southern Railway Company from London Bridge station, carrying with them food, cooking pots, bedding and everything else they were likely to need. For the lucky few, there were purpose built Hopping Huts or Sheds in which they set up home. Many families occupied the same Hut year after year, for others there were bell tents or roughly built shacks. Water and toilet facilities were generally provided in a blockhouse rather like the modern day camp site. [72]

4.8 We are the Ovalteenies & The Mark of Zorro

If holidays were a rare once a year treat, then the cinema could be called the weekly treat, because for most children a trip to the cinema was a weekly event. There was considerable concern before and after the Great War about the influence that the cinema was having on children.[73] There were claims that the cinema was leading to an increase in juvenile delinquency and depravity. It was feared that boys would go out and copy the crimes they had just seen in a gangster movie, or that they would steal to fund their cinema going habits; while it was feared that girls were being led into

[69] Interview with Dorothy (b.1927) p13

[70] There is also considerable autobiographical evidence relating to the annual migration of poorer sections of the working class to the hop fields of Kent.

[71] Interview with Margaret N (b c1930) pp 7-8

[72] For a full discussion of the hop picking see Gilda O'Neil, *Pull No More Bins: Hop Picking: Memories of a Vanished Way of Life* (London 1990)

depravity and immoral behaviour by what they were seeing on the screen. It is interesting to note how these concerns mirrored those of the Victorians about the penny dreadful and present-day concerns about the effects of television, video and computer games.[74]

To address these fears, several major surveys were conducted into the cinema going habits and the effects of the cinema on children. One of the largest was conducted by Dr F. M Spencer, the LCC Chief Medical Officer. Published in 1932 it found that over half of London's school children were regular cinemagoers.[75] Taking a sample of 21,280 children from 29 schools across the capital, Spencer found that 38.9% of London children went to the cinema at least once a week and that another 17.3% went at least once a month; only 13.4% said they never went. He reported that boys were more likely to go to the cinema than girls in the 8-10 age range. 45% of boys and 37% of girls went weekly, while in the 11-14-age range he found that slightly more girls than boys went twice a week (13% girls to 12% boys). Spencer found that

> In spite of the strong opinions of some able and devoted head teachers to the contrary, the preponderance of evidence is that the actual effect of the pictures on the children is not substantially harmful.[76]

Perhaps the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, best summed up the debate when he said that all his enquiries had lead him to believe that

> It is not so much Films and Shilling Shockers that make juvenile crime-
> but broken homes, indulgent mothers, wicked stepmothers and unemployment.[77]

Even if the fears of some that going to the pictures could lead to delinquency were shown to be groundless, the content of films, and who could watch them, were still tightly controlled; the British Board of Film Censors rated every film that was shown though some of their classifications may seem ridiculous to us today, for example, the Disney classic *Snow White* (released 1938) was originally classified as an A (Adult) film because it was felt that the witch was too frightening to be seen by younger

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[73] Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan* pp31-33 & 63-64
[74] Richard Ford, *Children in the Cinema* (London 1939) pp.69-80
[75] Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society in Britain 1930-39* (London 1989) pp 67-68
[76] F.M. Spencer findings of 1932 LCC report on *Children and the Cinema* quoted in Richard Ford, *Children in the Cinema* p 76
[77] Quoted in Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace* p 74

children. This rating was ignored by the LCC and many other local authorities who rated the film as a U (Universal) thus allowing it to be freely shown within the capital.

The cinema owners and the moviemakers had recognised early on the potential of children as patrons, not only as paying customers in the present but, more importantly, as potential customers of the future. The policy was that of 'get them young and keep them happy'. To do this many cinemas ran special children's matinees. These were usually on a Saturday either in the early afternoon or in the late morning, after the children had had time to do their chores at home, These matinee performances were universally known as 'the rush', or more commonly 'the 2d or 3d rush' depending on the price of admission. As Spencer showed, most children seem to have been regular cinemagoers. Of the 26 people asked for this thesis about going to the cinema 14 said that they went to the Saturday rush, several said that they also went during the week, often with their parents, only 3 of the contributors (all of them women) said that they never went. In two cases this was because they could not afford to go, while in the case of Minnie she was not allowed to go but her brothers were.[78] Indeed, as she recalled, so fond of the cinema was one of her brothers that he seems to have become addicted to the silver screen and to have regularly played truant from school:

> The second brother and he used to play truant from school and my mother always knew where to find he. He'd sit in the cinema and see the programme over and over again and they got so used to my mum enquiring up there that the man on the door used to say "go in and see if you can see him for yourself" And sometimes they used to put it on the screen and they, you know, used to make him come out. My mum had a lot of trouble with that one cos he played truant, you know, (she) always used to know where to find him. [79]

This perhaps confirms some of the worst fears of those who complained of the dangers of the cinema. For apart from the dangers of the films' content, their greatest concerns about the cinema were that children would be encouraged to truant from school and steal money to pay the entrance price. But it seems more likely that this was an isolated case, it may have been simply that the cinema was somewhere for this particular boy to go to get away from school.

Girls in particular sometimes found it difficult to go to the cinema, especially in the evenings, as parents insisted they be home before the film was due to end. So

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[78] This suggests that Minnie's mother did not think that the cinema was a suitable entertainment for her daughter as she might also become a 'cinema addict' but I have no definite proof of this.
[79] Interview with Minnie (b.1915) p7

concerned were some parents for the safety of their daughters that they would insist on taking them and bringing them home afterwards

> If I wanted to go from school my father always collected me and took me. He'd be waiting. He'd take me to the cinema at the Odeon at Mile End and he waited outside till I came out. Unfortunately he wouldn't let me out of his sight.[80]

Some cinema managers were keen to attract their young Saturday morning patrons and would offer door prizes as Emily recalled:

> We used to go to this Saturday morning one in the Ideal that's a little one in Mean St and when you got your entrance ticket they tore it in half and you kept the other half like and during the interval they put the lucky numbers up and you'd go next door and get a bag of sweets.[81]

Others cinemas would include a small bag of sweets in the ticket price:

> Saturday morning we used to go to a children's place and that was tup'pence ...you paid 2d and they gave you a little bag of sweets when you went in and you'd sit there and all of a sudden a woman would come in because she was gonna play the piano and everybody would scream their heads off. [82]

But not all of the cinema's patrons were paying customers:

> Sometimes we used to bunk in. Know the back doors? We'd go round the back to see if somebody had left the door open and if they did we would creep in and sit down but I think it was about thru'pence to go into the pictures then[83]

Not all cinemas were keen to have crowds of children filling up their seats on a Saturday. In some of the more refined suburbs, for example, Saturday morning children's pictures were unknown, while, in other areas, only the older scruffier cinemas catered for the Saturday morning rush:

> I went to the cinema every Saturday afternoon, downstairs also lived my Aunt Win She was my mother's sister.... and always on a Saturday afternoon Aunt Win used to say 'come on boy down to Brixton 'We used to walk all the way down to Brixton we used to go round to the Astoria Cinema ... She used to take me down regular every Saturday and this went on for three or four years... and then if we had a 6d we could go up to Brixton Hill and there was a cinema up there called, I can't think of the name of it we, used to call it 'the flea pit', because it was that sort of cinema. All the front seats was torn. It was mostly for the children that's why it was open. It used to hold a couple of hundred kids.[84]

Calling these old cinemas 'flea pits' or 'bug houses' was not just symbolic. There was always a risk to the patrons of these cinemas that they would leave with

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[80] Interview with Rita (b.1928) p6
[81] Interview with Emily (b.1924) p8
[82] Interview with Sam (b.1916) p6
[83] Interview with Marion (b.1923) p8
[84] Interview With Harry (b.1927) p10-11 Note the Astoria Cinema was about a mile from Harry's home while a trip 'up Brixton Hill' would have been well over 2 miles

more than they arrived with. Some cinemas would even resort to spraying the customers with disinfectant as they sat watching the film:

> A bloke, a big bloke, there used ter have a big spray, big brass spray, and he used ter come along and fumigate you all down one side then down the middle then down the other side.[85]

So what sorts of films did the children see at these Saturday matinees? The normal Saturday programme would include a cartoon, a short comedy film (Laurel and Hardy seems to have been a favourite), the weekly newsreel, an old feature and, of course the serial. These were originally old feature films that had been cut up into short segments which were shown each week but, by the early 1930s, there were specially made serials which became known as cliff hangers because each episode always ended on a note of danger or surprise which encouraged the children to come back for more next week.

The features that were shown at these matinees were always old. As Richard Ford explained in his book *Children in the Cinema,* only films that were too old to be shown on the regular weekly or even the Sunday circuit were released for showing at the Saturday matinees, and some films were never released. Thus, if the children wanted to see the latest and most popular films, they had to go to an ordinary showing and consequently pay the regular price.[86]

So what were the children's favourite films? In 1938, as part of his research for his study of children in the cinema, Richard Ford conducted his own survey among the staff and customers of the Odeon Cinema chain for which he worked. As part of this survey he asked cinema managers to identify who, in their opinion, were the most popular stars among their child audiences. He then went on to ask the children themselves by means of a questionnaire. The results were:

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[85] Interview with Peter C (b.1921)
[86] Ford *Children in the Cinema* p 9

Table 4. 2 children's favourite stars

Place	Cinema Manager	Children
1st	Buck Jones (Western)	Shirley Temple*
2nd	Shirley Temple (Child Star)*	Buck Jones
3rd	Jane Withers (Child Star)	Donald Duck
4th	Tim McCoy (Western)	Laurel & Hardy
5th	Ken Maynard (Western)	Gracie Fields
6th	Will Hay (comedy)	Will Hay
7th	Tarzan (Animal)	Freddie Bartholomew
8th	Gene Autry (Western)	Tim McCoy
9th	John Wayne (Western)	Gary Cooper
!0th	Bob Steele (Western)	Joe E Brown
11th	George Formby (Comedy)	Paul Robeson
12th	Laurel & Hardy (Comedy)	Jack Holt
13th	Jack Hoxie	Robert Donat
14th	Lightning (Horse)	William Powell
15th	Kazan (Dog)	Frankie Darro

* The placing of Shirley Temple 2nd by the managers was due to the fact that her films were not available in Odeon cinemas
Taken From Richard Ford *Children in the Cinema pp. 131-134*

It is interesting to see how the manager's ideas of what the children liked compared with what the children said. It would seem that Shirley Temple was, without doubt, the top star among children, followed closely by the cowboy Buck Jones. But the manager's list includes only stars of the films they were showing specifically for children (Tarzan, Lightning, the Wonder Horse) while the children themselves include what would probably have been recognised at the time as adult stars like Gracie Fields, Paul Robeson and Robert Donat. This indicates that children did not only attend the Saturday matinee but would also go to see the ordinary weekly programmes. When asked which films and stars they recalled, most of the contributors to this study recalled the stars of serials. The most popular with both male and female respondents were Flash Gordon and Tom Mix. Of the feature films the star most recalled was, as might be expected, Shirley Temple followed by Johnny Weissmuller (Tarzan). Shirley Temple was not only popular with children. Irene recalled that her mother was a fan, and used to take her to the cinema whenever a Shirley Temple film was showing, sometimes against her will:

> My mum used to take me sometimes, to see Shirley Temple. If there was a Shirley Temple picture she always took us to see Shirley Temple, And she would say 'you can have an afternoon off of school' I used to say 'no I don't want an afternoon off of school' so she used

> to take us of an evening, when we finished school. Take us to see Shirley Temple that was at Canning Town [87]

Although there were grave fears about the dangers of cinema on children, there were no such fears about the influence of that other new medium of the inter-war period, the radio. Radio broadcasting in Britain was a monopoly with only one organisation being licensed by the Post Office under the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905.

The British Broadcasting Company had been formed in 1922 by the major radio equipment manufactures led by Marconi, supposedly in the public interest.[88] The company was placed under control of a young energetic pioneer named John Reith who took the title of Director General. The company was reorganised in 1926 to become a public corporation, thus taking it outside the realm of commercialism that was to become such a feature of American radio. Hence, radio in the form of BBC with its stated aims of providing education and information as well as entertainment to the public, was not seen as a threat to the morals of the nation's children but rather as a medium for good. The BBC had started providing programmes for children almost from the outset. Perhaps the best known was *Children's Hour*, which started as a Sunday evening programme in 1924; it soon became a regular daily part of the schedule and was to run throughout the inter-war period and beyond.

It is then strange to note that, while most of the contributors to this thesis were able to remember at least some of the films they had seen as children, few could recall the programmes they had listened to on the radio, and only one (Gwen born in 1935) recalled listening to *Children's Hour*. Radio ownership grew steadily in the inter-war period so that by 1938 74% of homes in the London area had a radio set.[89] Even those without electricity could listen to the radio, thanks to the accumulator battery. It was often one of the children's jobs to take these heavy glass jars to the local bicycle or oil shop to be recharged, and woe betide the child that dropped it on the way

> You had to take the accumulator round the watch you ma call it every week like to have it charged up. It cost a penny or tup'pence if you dropped that accumulator there used to be bloody murders because they cost a lot of money in them days[90]

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[87] Interview with Irene (b.1928) p9
[88] Actually the radio manufactures were concerned to boost the sale of their new domestic radio apparatus.
[89] Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939* (London 1983) p 13
[90] Interview With Fred M (b.1928) p8

One of the reasons why so few people recalled the programmes they had listened to might have been because the radio was an expensive luxury in the average working-class home. A good set could cost as much as £5 (more than a week's wages for the average man), while the licence, introduced in 1922 added another 10s to the household's annual budget.[91] It is then perhaps little wonder that the radio set was often under the firm control of father as Fred S recalled

> Yeah the first radio we had it was a crystal set. Dad got hold of this and he wouldn't let us kids touch it so he kept it in his bedroom, and he used to sit in the bedroom and listen and we used to say let's have a listen dad. You have that earphone and you have that and we'd both have a listen and he'd say that's enough oh dear but finally it was a box of tricks he had it in his bedroom because he wouldn't let us kids touch it had wires going into the kitchen and it was a speaker like a horn thing it had a round base and it came up and a horn thing there used to go in and say on the other side there's some dance music is that it that it that's it there we had it.[92]

This could also explain why so few working-class children remember listening to *Children's Hour*, which was broadcast at 5 pm, before father came home from work, and allowed the set to be switched on. Another reason could be, of course, that while middle-class children were indoors at this time working-class children were playing outside and were not interested in the radio. Things changed slightly with the coming of the British Relay Company who provided a cable radio set. This allowed the listener to select from five different stations, including the BBC's Home and Light programmes and Radio Luxembourg.

The BBC programme that was recalled by most of the contributors was '*Henry Hall's Guest Night*'. This may well be because it was popular with both children and adults. Another programme that was recalled by many of the contributors was '*We are the Ovalteenies'*, broadcast on Sunday evenings, not by the BBC, but by Europe's main commercial broadcaster Radio Luxembourg, which had begun broadcasting commercially sponsored programmes in 1931. This programme, sponsored by a hot drinks manufacturer, was enormously popular with children, combining as it did a mixture of popular music, stories and children's features. Why was Radio Luxemburg so popular? One reason may have been that the BBC was aiming at a middle rather than a working-class audience and that there programming was seen as Fred S explained as stuffy and boring by working-class listeners:

> .Sir John Reith was a religious type Sunday was the absolute pits on the radio but radio Luxemburg was a different I can remember there was the Billy Cotton show there was the

[91] Mark Pegg Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939 p 44
[92] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) pp8-9

> Ovalteenies there was Fu Manchu I think and there was Benito silk stockings and there was a betting bloke. On the actual BBC I remember Henry Hall every morning on the London regional programme. Of an evening about 10.30 all the bands used to broadcast from the hotels.[93]

These findings are supported by the work of Mark Pegg who has shown how Reith's desire to raise the cultural standards of the nation led to what must surly have been seen by the vast majority of his audience (Especially towards the end of the period) as dull and boring.[94] It would seem that it was not until the outbreak of war in 1939 that the BBC came into its own; until then it was the cinema rather than the radio, that provided the most memorable form of entertainment and source of information for working-class children and adult alike.

4.9 Children's Books and Comics

There was one other form of quiet entertainment activity available to the working-class children of the 1920s and 30s, and that was reading. There had been a small market for children's books for many centuries, but this older form of children's literature had tended to take the form of nursery rhymes, fairy tales and religious tracts, all aimed at imparting a moral message to their mainly upper and middle-class readership the members of which, before the coming of mass literacy in the latter part of the nineteenth century, were generally the only ones able to read them. It was only after the 1880 Education Act had made the provision of some form of elementary education compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 10 that there developed a mass market for children's literature. There then emerged specialist authors like Talbot Baines Reed, the inimitable first editor of *The Boys Own Paper,* G.A. Henty, whose adventure stories were to capture the imagination of generations of children, and of course, the author of a whole world of stories for younger children, Beatrix Potter.

By the start of the inter-war period there was a small army of writers producing works for children led by W.E Johns whose stories about the life and adventures of the First World War Fighter ace Captain Bigglesworth and his trusty side-kick Ginger, were to remain popular with boys throughout the period and beyond,

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[93] Ibid.

[94] As Pegg points out The BBC did make some efforts towards its working-class audience with programmes like *'Men Talking'* and *'Time to Spare'* but these were often poorly produced and scripted. Mark Pegg *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939* pp92-100

and Charles Hampton better known as Frank Richards, the author of the Billy Bunter and innumerable other school stories. For girls, there were the school adventure stories of authors like Angela Brazil and the redoubtable Eleanor Brent-Dyer whose Chalet School stories were to achieve lasting popularity. It was also during the 1930s that another author began to write stories for younger children. She was to go on to become one of the best known children's writers of all time, with her tales of fairies and goblins and of course Noddy and Big Ears, as well as her stories about the adventures of the Secret Seven and the Famous Five for older children. She was, of course, Enid Blyton. This is not the place for a detailed study of the children's literature of the inter-war period, which could, and probably will, form the basis of other work. Rather here I wish to explore the attitudes both reflected in and towards children's literature of the time, and to contrast these attitudes with those of the other major form of working-class children's written entertainment the comic.

It can be seen from an examination of almost any of the children's books of the period that they were written from the perspective of, and aimed at, the middle class. Many of the stories were set in the world of the boarding school, with titles like '*The Fourth Form Conspiracy*'[95] and '*Buns in the Dorm*'.[96] Perhaps the best known of all such stories are those detailing the adventures of Billy Bunter or the girls of the Chalet School. All of these stories were set in an environment of which working-class children had no experience or to which they had no access. In addition to school stories, there were for boys, tales of adventure in the jungles of Africa, the outback of Australia, and the Wild West of America. For girls, there were stories of fairy princesses, fair maidens in times of old and ponies and horses. Publishers like Collins, the Harmsworth Press and even the Religious Tract Society all produced children's annuals at Christmas time each year. The girls' annuals, in addition to the usual types of stories, included instructions on such diverse topics as how to conserve a woollen scarf, and the making of patchwork pictures and embroidering with seeds.[97] Boys' annuals contained instructions on things like, how to make a wooden biplane, moth collecting, boxing, and even learning to swim.[98] The tone of writing and the language used, as well as the content of such books, all tend to support the notion that the

[95] Anon *The Jolly Book for Girls* (London 1934)
[96] Anon *The Bumper Book for Boys* (London c1930)
[97] *The School Girl Annual* (Religious Tract Society 1927)

majority of children's literature of the time was written with a middle-class audience in mind. This is hardly surprising if one remembers that the authors of such works were themselves drawn almost exclusively from the middle class.

So what was the attitude of the working-class parents and, perhaps more importantly, children towards these forms of children's literature? The answer to this question, like so much else in this thesis, is not straightforward. As with so many other aspects of working-class life and culture at the time it seems to have been dependent upon the family's position within the working class. Thus in upper working-class families like those of Harry B, and those with aspirations of advancement, books were seen as a positive thing. Children were encouraged to read, and books would be bought as presents at Christmas and birthdays.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the lowest and poorest homes, like that of George, books were seen as a waste of time and also, in the often-overcrowded conditions in which many such families were forced to live, a waste of space. For many working-class families it would seem that reading books was seen as an activity suitable only for girls, boys were expected to be playing rough and tumble games outside the home, not stuck indoors with a book, and those boys that preferred the sedentary entertainment that a book might offer were often seen as odd. Only during the long winter nights, or when the weather was at its very worst was it acceptable for a working-class boy to be seen reading anything other than a schoolbook and even then the book would normally be expected to be an adventure story or something extolling the manly virtues.

While reading books was seen as only suitable for girls and posh or sissy boys, both working-class children and adults viewed the reading of comics as an acceptable activity for both working-class girls and boys. From the outset comics had been aimed at a working-class readership. The first recognised British comic *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday* was published in 1884 and was aimed at the newly literate young working-class adult audience.[99]The boom in comics was fuelled in 1890 by the introduction of two new comic papers *Comic Cuts* and *Illustrated Chips,* soon to be shortened to *Chips.* These were to run for the next sixty-three years. While both of these papers

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[98] Pete Ridge, Harold Avery, R.A. Goodyear, *Collins Schoolboy Annual* (1925)
[99]Anon, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comic English Periodicals for Children From Victorian Times to the Present Day* (Victoria and Albert Museum 1983) p73

were still aimed at a young adult audience, it was soon recognised that children were drawn to their pages and it did not take long before comics aimed specifically at children were introduced.[100]

By the end of the First World War comics were firmly established as a form of working-class entertainment, with titles like *Sparks* and *The Funny Wonder* costing as little as a ½ d; comics were affordable by all. With the ending of wartime restrictions on the supply of paper and ink in 1920 the comic took off, with many new titles appearing that year, perhaps the best known of which was *Film Fun,* reflecting the influence of the new media of Film and, in particular, the products of the dream factory that was Hollywood. This weekly paper was aimed at older children and young adults. Costing just three ha'pence when it was first published, it contained stories featuring favourite characters from the movies. The cover of the first issue featured Ben Turpin and the now almost forgotten Charlie Lynn in a film called '*Attention to Business'*. *Film Fun* was to become an icon of British comics and is recalled fondly by many people. Issued every Tuesday, and from 1922 costing 2d, it reflected the changing face of the cinema; thus by 1939 the front cover featured another comedy double act Laurel and Hardy.

Comics, like books, were both age and gender specific; thus *Sparks* changed its name and its readership in 1920, when it became *Little Sparks.* The first comic aimed exclusively at children had been *Rainbow.* First published in 1914, this too was aimed at very young children. This comic had an amazingly wide readership as it was approved of by all sections of society; indeed in the inter-war period one copy was delivered weekly to Buckingham Place for the entertainment of the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret.[101] While comics like '*Tiger Tim's Weekly'* and *Puck* featured adventure stories and were aimed at boys, comics like *The Chicks Own* and *Sunbeam* were aimed at girls. Some comics, of course, were universal, like the 1936 *Mickey Mouse Weekly.* The comics of the inter-war period were not just divided by age and gender; class difference also reared its ugly head not only because, like their more expensive counterparts the children's book, they were often set in the middle-class world but also because of a difference in pricing policy. There were in the inter-war period two distinctly different classes of comics. There were the more expensive and

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[100] Ibid pp 73-75
[101] Ibid p 81

exclusive coloured comics like *Rainbow* and *Tiger Tim Weekly* costing 2d, and in the case of *Rainbow* and *Tiny Tots,* purporting to be an aide to reading for younger children, and the cheaper black and white comics like the boy's comic *The Magnet,* which cost just a penny and was very definitely aimed at the working-class market.

Why then was the reading of comics so much more acceptable than reading books to both working-class children and adults? Firstly they were cheap and easily available. Unlike books, comics could be purchased at the corner shop and cost only a penny or two and one did not need to go to a specialist shop to buy them. Secondly, and this was important in the often cramped and overcrowded conditions in which many working-class families lived, they were relatively small and so could be easily stored. Thirdly, because they were so cheap that they could be swapped with friends without bringing down the wrath of an indignant adult on the heads of the children; indeed as Irene recalled, some enterprising shopkeepers established their own exchange system thus establishing a sort of comic lending library:

> We used to go round the corner and buy comics they was only about a halfpenny or a farthing some of them were and if you took three comics back you got two comics for nothing so we used to go round the corner take three comics back get two comics for nothing.[102]

What of the libraries surely working-class children could obtain books from there, which could then be returned without the need to clutter-up the home? It is true that books were available to children from the public lending libraries but any child wanting to borrow books first had to overcome a number of hurdles. Children from upper-working class families, or those with pretensions of being so, were met, like Angela Rodaway, with parental opposition because, as her mother said, the books were likely to be full of fleas and bugs.[103] The second was that while libraries were, in theory, open to all, many librarians were reluctant to allow scruffy and often dirty children access to their precious stocks. The final hurdle, and for children from the poorest backgrounds the highest, was that children needed an adult to introduce them into the closed world of the library before they would be allowed to borrow books. This was often a closed route to the working-class child, especially if they came from a poor household where reading was, as we have seen, regarded as a waste of a child's time.

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[102] Interview with Irene (b .1928) p7
[103] Angela Rodaway, *A London Childhood* p97

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to look in upon that most secret of children's worlds- the land of play. We have seen that the games that children played were dependent upon a number of factors. Firstly the age of the child: as children got older so their games changed, becoming more gender specific. We have seen that girls were more inclined to play so called baby games than boys, and that girls were keen to organise and take part in the play of younger children. This may have been because of their perceived, and actual role, in taking care of younger children. It has been suggested that as they got older, boys' games, in particular, got rougher, and boys were allowed to wander further away from home, while girls were expected to remain within their mothers' call.

The role of those in authority, be they teachers, welfare and youth workers, policemen, clergymen or government officials, in attempting to direct children's play along socially acceptable lines has also been explored. It has been shown that those in authority were particularly concerned with the control and prevention of juvenile delinquency and the formation of street gangs, which, it was feared, was the first step on the road to crime. We have seen how attempts to control children's play through the use of after school play centres were doomed to failure simply because of a lack of finance and facilities. Moreover most of the play schemes that were introduced were in respectable lower middle and upper working-class areas rather than in the poorest districts, where it might be argued they were most needed, and could have done the most good. It has been seen that the boys' clubs that did operate in the poorest districts had very little influence of over children's activities because generally they catered only for older adolescents usually having a lower membership age limit of 14. Even those clubs that did admit younger members normally did not allow them to remain beyond 7pm, and also restricted both the numbers and ages of their junior membership.

We have seen how the efforts of the uniformed youth organisations were hampered in poor areas, both by the requirement that all members must contribute towards their funds and wear a uniform, and also by opposition from both parents who viewed such organisations as preparing their children for war, and mothers who did not think that such activities were suitable for their daughters. We have also seen how in some of the roughest areas other children derided membership of such

organisations so much that those that did choose to join might, like Louis Heren, be forced to hide their membership from their peers. It has been demonstrated that in poor areas the most effective control on children's activities came through religious groups, with most children attending Sunday school, which was seen as a mark of working-class respectability- like having a whitened front step. Many children also attended church based clubs, or evening magic lantern or slide shows at the local church missions, being encouraged by promises of outings and Christmas parties and presents. The influence of the media has also been explored, both in the shape of the new mediums of radio and film and also in the form of the written word, be it in books or comics. It has been shown how, particularly in the case of the cinema, the media did have a marked effect on the games that children played.

Chapter Five
The Child at Work

Introduction

This final chapter examines the vexed issue of children's paid employment. Unlike other chapters in this study, this chapter does not concentrate solely on London but looks at the official record across England and Wales, to demonstrate both the official and popular attitudes towards children's employment. For, although it was able to exercise some control through its bye-laws, London was inevitably affected by both the national debate and legislation surrounding the whole issue of children's employment.

Before any examination of children's work can be undertaken, the question of what constituted work has first to be established. This study has already looked at the employment of children by parents within the home. Here it seeks to explore the world of work beyond the home thus, in this context, work can mean labour for monetary gain in the form of wages or earning either from self-enterprise or paid employment, or it can mean children's labour in helping with a family enterprise like a shop or market stalls.

. Under section 8 of the Education Act 1918 child labour was officially abolished in Britain and, so according to those in authority at least, there was no longer a problem with the employment of school aged children, but was this actually the case?

As part of the 1918 Education Act, the 'half-time system', under which children over the age of 12 could be employed part-time either mornings or afternoons provided they had made a set number of school attendances or had reached a prescribed academic standard, and the exemption system which allowed children over the age of thirteen to leave school completely, were abolished. At least this is the commonly held belief, but as will be shown below this was not actually the case.

The 1918 Education Act also set out to regulate school-aged children's part-time employment outside school hours. The Act banned all employment of children under the age of 10 while allowing those between 10 and 12 to be employed only by their parents in light agricultural and horticultural work. It laid down that children over the age of 12 could be employed, but only for 15 hours per week and for no more than 2 hours on Sundays during term-time. It further provided that children could not

be employed during normal school hours or before 6am or after 8pm. It was felt that by imposing these stringent controls that the problem of child labour would be overcome.

The first section of this chapter will examine the Board of Education's failure to implement the1918 Education Act. Taking examples from both rural and industrial areas, it will be shown that London was in an anomalous position, being one of the few areas of the country to utilise its powers under the 1899 Education Act to pass the bye-laws restricting children's employment, and so effectively keeping all children at school until the age of 14. The section will go on to look at the opposition in some areas to the raising of the school leaving age, from both employers and Local Authorities, showing how the regulation of children's employment and the raising of the school leaving age was finally brought about not so much by a concern for the well being of children, but rather by the economic crisis of 1922.

This section will show how the notion that child labour was a thing of the past was to be perpetuated throughout the inter-war period both by the Board of Education and the Home Office, which through the Local Authorities was responsible for policing child employment legislation.

The second section of this chapter will look at how effectively the child labour laws were enforced asking why it was that Home Office officials, despite evidence to the contrary, continually argued that there was no need for further legislation, and continued to claim throughout the period that there was no longer a child labour problem. They claimed that the light work performed by a small minority of the poorest children was often beneficial rather than harmful, in that it both brought much needed extra income into the poorest homes and, more importantly, from the point of view of the Home Office Children's Branch, it gave boys a sense of discipline and prevented them from becoming delinquents.

As will be shown, it was not the 1918 Education Act that led to the apparent abolition of children's employment but rather the 1921 Education Act. The section will look at how effectively the 1921, and subsequent Education Acts, were enforced, using a mixture of official figures and reports together with oral testimony, to show how the provisions of the various acts relating to children's employment were honoured more in the breach than in their enforcement.

The section will go on to look at the process of licensing children's employment in London, asking how difficult it was to obtain a licence, how

effectively the licensing system was policed, and if many working-class children even knew that they were required to have a licence before they could work.

The third section will then use oral testimony to explore some of the forms of employment engaged in by school-aged, working-class children in London in the inter-war period. It will ask whether the work that the contributors reported performing would have been allowed under the licensing system or whether indeed, some of the tasks reported by them were even legal. This picture of school-aged children's employment will then be contrasted with the view of child employment before the First World War as shown in the works of Davin, Humphries and Ross, to demonstrate how effective legislation was in changing children's work patterns in the inter-war period.

. Finally, the chapter will look briefly at the debate surrounding the raising of the school leaving age to 15 that developed in the early 1930s and will discuss the provisions of the 1936 Education Act that was to have been brought into force on the 1st of September 1939 showing that it would have been a retrograde rather than a positive step on the road of children's welfare.

5.1 <u>The 1918 Education Act and Child Labour</u>

There had been calls to end the half-time system before the First World War, but it was not to be until the post war drive to create a 'Home Fit For Heroes', that reform of the child labour laws became a priority. H.A.L Fisher was appointed Minister of Education in 1917 with the task of reforming elementary education. The result, after much debate, was the 1918 Education Act. This Act included in Sub-sections 8ii & 8 iii, clauses that sought to abolish half-time working, to limit school exemptions and to control the employment of school aged children through a system of licensing, [1] The Act did not, however, as some historians seem to believe, immediately abolish either the half-time system, or the system of school exemptions under which children over 12, who had a good attendance record and had reached a prescribed standard, were allowed to leave school and enter the work place full time, often to the frustration of their school teachers who saw their brightest and best pupils leaving the classroom at the earliest possible age.[2] This had become the normal practice in many areas, thus

[1] 8 & 9 Geo. V Education Act 1918

[2] The conditions for granting exemptions varied from area to area depending on the attitude of the local authority thus in London where the bye-laws already imposed a leaving of 14 none were granted.

effectively lowering the school leaving age set in the 1899 Education Act from 14 to 12.[3]

The 1921 Census recorded that in Rochdale, the town with the highest numbers of school aged workers, some 45% of 12 and 13 years old girls and 47 % of 12 and 13year old boys were in regular full-time employment while in Preston the figures were 29% and 15 % respectively.[4] Only the worst pupils, those who did not attend school regularly, and those who were intellectually challenged, were required to stay on at school until the age of 14. In some rural areas the school leaving age was even lower. In Oxfordshire, for example, the by-laws allowed a child partial exemption from school attendance at the age of 11, provided that they were going to work in agriculture, while any child over the age of 12 could gain an exemption once they had reached standard VI.[5]

The 1918 Education Act, which came on to the statute books on the 8th August 1918, had been produced at a time when the country was still in the throes of war and so, with no prospects of peace in sight, many of its provisions, including section 8, (the section containing the provisions for the control of children's employment), were suspended, to be brought into force only at the end of the war. Despite the fact that fighting ceased at 11am on 11 November 1918 no formal peace treaty was signed until 10th January 1920, and it was not until the middle of 1921 that King George V, by an Order in Council, finally declared the war to be officially over.[6] By using this technicality the Home Office and Board of Education (BOE) were able to postpone the implementation of the employment sections of the Education Act. So that it was not until August 1920 that circular 1172 was issued by the BOE informing local authorities that Section 8 subsections ii and iii, (which abolished half-time working and exemptions except in special circumstances) were to be enforced from 1st January 1921, but this circular had to be withdrawn on 7th December because the war had still not officially been declared to be over.[7] Thus it was not until May 1922 that Circular 1262 was issued by the Board of Education to bring into force section 8 on

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[3] 56-57 Vict.c 51 Education Act 1899
[4] Figures quoted in David Fowler, *The First Teenagers: The lifestyle of Young Wage-earners in Interwar Britain* (London 1995) p18
[5] Oxfordshire County Council Children's Employment bye-law 11
[6] Section 8 iii said that this section will not be implemented until the conclusion of the present war
[7] Brian Simon, *The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940,* (London 1974) p.32

the 1st July 1922 and so finally end the system of school exemptions and half- time working which had for so long undermined the school leaving age of 14.[8]

This Act was, however, replaced within just a couple of months by the 1921 Education Consolidation Act, which came into force on 1st October 1922.[9] This Act went further than the 1918 Act, by removing the right of local authorities to issue exemptions under, so called, special circumstances as it was felt that certain authorities might use this to undermine the raising of the school leaving age. Even this, however, still did not, as one might expect, lead to the immediate end of the system of child labour because the Act did not apply retrospectively, while according to Home Office records the half time system was not officially abolished in Lancashire until 1st January 1923. Even then, children who had already left school under the exemption system, and those already working half-time, were allowed to continue to do so, but no new exemptions were issued from this date. It was even proposed, simply to allow children already working half-time to begin working full-time as soon as the Act came into force so that those in authority would be able to state that there were no longer any half timers.[10] Thus, it was not until almost the middle of 1924 that the last school aged child to be employed under the infamous half-time system was finally brought into the ordinary full time workforce on reaching the age of 14. In fact local bye-laws still containing a school exemption clause were being authorised by the Home Office almost until the Act came into force.[11]

Why was there such reluctance on the part of the Home Office, Board of Education and even Local Authority officials to see this plainly beneficial piece of legislation brought into force? The simple answer to this question is economics. It was estimated that the implementation of the Act would require that local education authorities find places for approximately an extra one million children aged between 12 and 14 and the resources simply were not there to provide for such a large number of additional children within the school system. In some areas the requirement to send children to school had to be suspended altogether because of a lack of available space.

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[8] According to Brian Simon in *The Politics of Educational Reform 1920-1940* pp32-38 the implementation of Section 8 of the 1918 Act was suspended as a cost cutting measure in 1921 as part of the retrenchment of all educational expenditure at that time and it was not until the 1921 Act came into force that the systems of half time and school exemptions was brought to a halt.

[9] 11 & 12 Geo.5 Education Act 1921

[10] Public Record Office (PRO) ED/11/43 Employment of Children 1920-29

[11] PRO ED/24/900/34 the last authority to pass a by-law containing an exemption cause was Leeds City Council who introduced by-laws containing an exemption clause in December 1921.

Thus it was practically impossible to implement the Act before 1922, and even then concern was still being expressed within the Board of Education that some areas would have difficulty in accommodating and controlling large numbers of older children, who did not want to be there anyway, within the elementary school system. There were also concerns being expressed by teachers that the presence of older children, who had passed all of their standards and were simply waiting to attain the age of 14 so that they might legally leave school, would cause disruption and discipline problems within the classroom.[12]

The Act was also opposed by many employers who feared that it would raise costs as children of 14 would want higher pay than those of 12 or 13 in practice however these concerns proved unfounded as the economic down turn of 1921 forced wages and so labour costs down employers were able to employ older adolescents in what had previously been seen as children's jobs.

Strangely it was to be economics which were to overcome the reluctance of the school authorities to impose the effective raising of the school leaving age; it was felt that, by forcing children between the ages of 12 and 14 back into school, the labour market would be eased and thus reduce the problems of both of adult and youth unemployment, because older boys would now be doing jobs once performed by the younger brothers.[13]

The implementation of the employment sections of the1918 and 1921 Education Acts was to become, for a while at least, another battleground in the never-ending struggle for power between local and national government that had been raging since before the introduction of the Local Government Board in the Victorian era. The Act stated, for example, that a child was required to attend school until the age of 14 and that he or she was not to be deemed to have reached 14 until the end of the school term in which their birthday fell. This led some local authorities to institute extra administrative terms that bore no relation to the academic year in protest. Thus the Town Council of Hinkley in West Yorkshire, for example, tried to introduce twelve terms per year, so that children could leave school within a fortnight of reaching 14. The Board of Education received a stream of protests from education

[12] PRO ED 11/80 Correspondence with Home Office & Ministry of Labour 1923-1926
[13] PRO ED 11/28 School Leaving Age 1919-1921

authorities, most notably the Lancashire County Council who also proposed to introduce a twelve-term year.[14]

This issue was also a cause of conflict between the various branches of government. The BOE also received enquiries from the Ministry of Labour about what constituted a school term under the Act and whether their factory inspectors should take action when they found 14 year old children working before the end of the school term. The Board's response to these enquiries was the eminently sensible one that, while it was not responsible for the enforcement of the employment provisions of the Act, the inspectors should 'act with discretion.' This in turn brought a protest from the Home Office that the Board of Education was interfering in matters that were not its concern.[15] It is little wonder therefore, that with this inter-departmental war raging in Whitehall, little notice was taken of those children who quietly left school when they reached 14 and entered the workplace. In some areas of London, for example, it seems to have been fairly common for children to leave school on the Friday of the week in which they were 14 and to start work the following Monday or even, in a few extreme cases, Saturday morning with no concern for the regulations:

> I left (school) when I was 14. I left on the Friday, and I was 14, and on the Saturday morning I went to Mazda Street and there was a purse and leather factory and they made purses and bags and went over there and I got a job there for 10/- a week.[16]

Was this then the end of child labour in Britain? The simple answer to this question is no. While both the 1918 and 1921 Acts made it illegal to employ a child under 12 years of age, they both allowed school children between the ages of 10 and 12 to be employed by their parents in light agricultural and horticultural work. They also allowed children between the ages of 12 and 14 to be employed for a maximum of fifteen hours per week during school terms with no more than two hours on Sundays and school days and not before 5am or after 8pm on other days.[17] This however still left a large loophole because, in theory at least, children could be legally employed for up to 14 hours a day on Saturdays and during the school holidays.

In practice, however, children's working hours were generally regulated through the medium of the bye-laws. Thus, in London, a child was not allowed to

[14] PRO ED11/80 Correspondence with the Ministry of Labour 1923-26
[15] ibid.
[16] Interview with Minnie (b.1905) p10
[17] 11 & 12 Geo V Education Act (1921) Section 92i

work for more than five hours on a Saturday and no more than two hours on weekdays during the school holidays.[18] Both Acts also specified that children below the age of 14 should not be employed in street trading, a ban that in London at least, as will be shown, was honoured more in the breach than the observance, or 'in any occupation that was likely to be injurious to his life, limb, health or education.'[19] As will be seen below the definition of what was considered injurious to health could be very flexible.

In rural areas children below the age of 12 were still regularly withdrawn from school to help with farm work or to act as beaters, for shoots and such like, on the grounds that they were helping their parents. Local magistrates, who it must be remembered were often the landowners and farmers for whom the children were working, did not regard these activities, as being in contravention of the Act.

In the urban context, the image of children working half the day at the mill and then going off to school to spend the afternoon sleeping in the classroom was finally dispelled by the Act. This however, as will be discussed below, did not mean that many children no longer arrived exhausted at school after having been working illegally for several hours before class.

5.2 The enforcement and policing of the child labour laws

Both Acts laid the duty of enforcing the employment regulations on the local authorities through their bye-laws. In London the task of policing child labour was placed on the school attendance service, while in the rest of the country the burden was to fall, either upon the borough police as in Hull, or more commonly on the Children's Care Committee workers. Some local authorities, like Newcastle upon Tyne, employed a care worker solely to police school attendance and children's employment, but for the majority it was simply another job that was heaped onto the shoulders of an already over burdened and hard pressed group of mainly volunteer children's welfare workers.

How were the employment provisions of the 1921 Education Act enforced and what action was taken against those who broke Sections 92 or 95 of the 1921 Act or the regulatory bye-laws that all local authorities were required to have?

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[18] It should be noted that the restriction on working during school holidays was not generally applied in other areas.
[19] 11 & 12 Geo V Education Act (1921) Section 92 ii a and ii c

The enforcement of the employment provisions of the 1921 Act was not as simple as might at first be thought. Although the Act clearly prohibited the employment of all children under the age of 12, except in agriculture, it did not set out to restrict the employment of older children but merely required Local Authorities, through the bye-laws, to regulate their employment. In theory this allowed Local Authorities the freedom to ban or regulate school children's employment to meet local conditions as they saw fit. In practice, these bye-laws were generally based on a set of model laws distributed to each local authority by the Home Office. Only in areas like London, which had enough political power to stand up to the bullying tactics of Home Office officials, were bye-laws passed which did not conform to the approved model, and even here it was more the wording, rather than content of the laws themselves, that was the bone of contention.

Under the Act, unless all children's employment was banned through the bye-laws, all local authorities were required to licence every school child over the age of 12 who wanted to work. They were to ensure that the child was fitted for the work that he or she was to perform and that the employment would not be harmful to his or her health or education. Many local authorities, including London, required that children undergo a medical examination to prove their fitness to work before they were licensed, but for the majority of children no follow up examinations were conducted once they had started work, to discover whether the work they were doing was in fact injurious to their health. In London less than 5% of children were re-examined. Those opposed to the employment of school-aged children expressed concern that these medical examinations were at best perfunctory and that many of the poorest children, who were the most likely to want or need to work, were passed as fit by the medical boards more on social rather than purely medical grounds. They claimed that many unfit youngsters were being legally employed simply because it was felt that their families needed the little money they could bring in to the home. Again in London less than 2% of applicants were refused a licence on medical grounds and none on the grounds that it might interfere with schoolwork.

How difficult was it for a child to get a licence to work? In most areas it was a simple matter for a school child to obtain a licence, all that was required was for the child's parents or employer to notify the headmaster of the child's school and, after a medical, provided the work did not breach the bye-laws and was not considered likely to adversely effect the child's schoolwork, a licence would be issued. Indeed many

people, like the Medical Officer of Health for the County of Cheshire, who was quoted extensively in the 1924 departmental report into the workings of the 1918 Education Act, claimed that working was good for working-class boys as it gave them 'an admirable sense of responsibility and in consequence these children are more likely to become good citizens.' While the headmaster of one unidentified school, where 20 boys were registered as working before school, was quoted as saying that 'These boys are among the brightest in the school.'[20]

In response to the Home Office survey of the workings of the 1918 Education Act, which was conducted in preparation for the 1924 report, the London County Council informed the Home Office that there were 2,882 children working for the hour between 7.00am - 8 am before school and between 5.30pm and 6.30pm after school mainly delivering newspapers, and that as the council prohibited children below the age of 16 from street trading there were no school children selling in the streets.[21] An examination of the infringement register of just one London Education Division shows how inaccurate this statement was. In division 5, Lambeth, in 1924 there were 317 infringements reported of which 79, that is almost 25%, were for illegal street trading by school children.[22]

This complacent attitude that, because it was not allowed it was not happening, can clearly be seen in the files of both the local authorities and the Home Office throughout this period. A study of the Lambeth infringement register for the period 1924-29 reveals some interesting facts. As can be seen from Figure 5.1 the average age of the children caught working illegally was about 13. There is a steady rise in the numbers of children found to be working as they get nearer to the school leaving age, though it is interesting to note that the youngest child found working was just 6 years old. As one would expect, there is a sharp reduction in the number of children found to be working illegally over the age of 14 and the majority of these cases are for boys between 14 and 16 found street trading. It is also interesting to note that the vast majority of children found working illegally were boys, in 1924, for example, of the 317 reported cases in Lambeth only 15, that is 4.7%, were girls while in subsequent years the figures were even less, 3.1% in 1925, 2.3% in 1926 and only 1.7% in 1927 and 1928. These low figures were not just confined to Lambeth. In the

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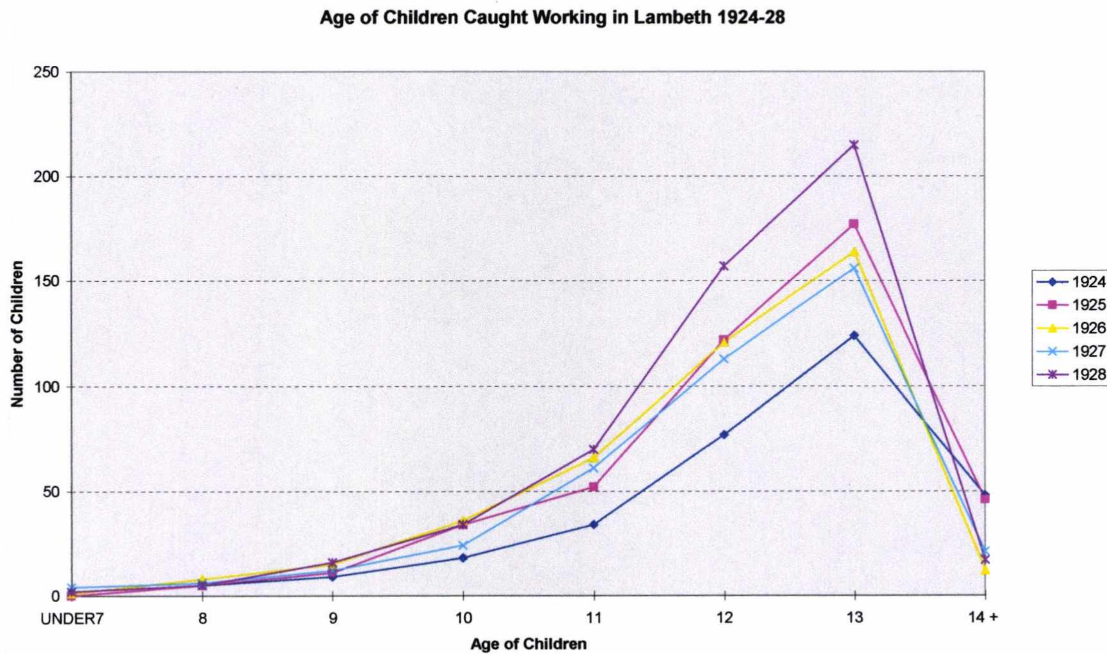
[20] PRO HO45/13722 Employment of Children and Street Trading of Young Persons 1920 Onwards
[21] ibid.
[22] (LMA) EO/WEL/4/1 Children's Employment Legislation Infringement Register 1924-29

neighbouring division of Wandsworth only 1.1% of reported incidents involved girls in 1930 and only 3.4% in 1931.



Register London Metropolitan Archive file EO/WEL Figure 1 Age of Children Caught working in Lambeth 1924-1928 Taken from Division 5 Infringement /4/1

As can be seen from Figure 5.2 while it was declining throughout the period there were each year a significant number of children reported for illegal street trading. The apparent decline in this figure should be treated with caution, for it seems to have become the practice to report cases of children working on market stalls at the weekend as breaches of the Saturday and Sunday employment regulations, rather than as breaches of the street trading rules. It was also the practice, as is reflected in the constantly high numbers of cases, to report all children below the age of 12 caught working as breaching the 'catch all' section 92 i of the 1918 Act rather than for any more specific offence.[23] It should also be noted that not all of the children reported as working illegally were in fact unlicensed. In the case of breaches of the rules for working hours on school days and during the holidays the majority of children were fully licensed, but were found to be working outside the prescribed hours. In the five years covered by the register there were only two reported instances of children found

[23] Section 92i of the 1918 Education Act prohibited the employment of all children below the age of ten and limited the employment of children between ten and twelve to working for their parents in light horticulture or agriculture.

working during school hours, and in both cases they were boys nearing the age of 14, both of whom were reported by the same officer who found them working for the same employer.

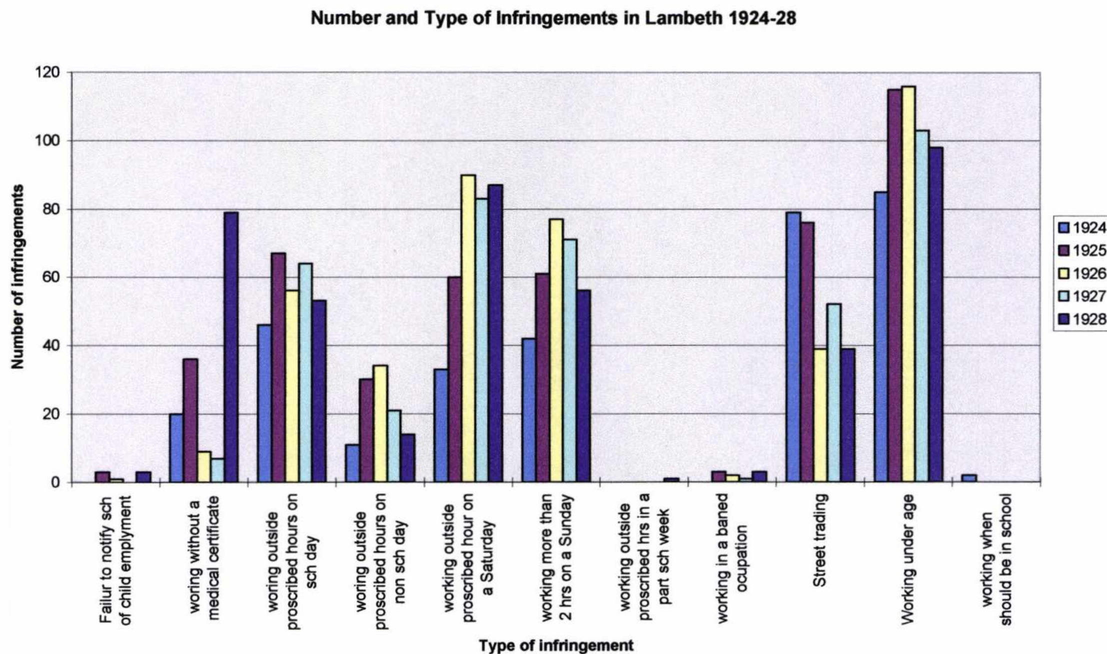


Figure 5.2 Number and Type of Infringements taken from London Metropolitan Archive file EO/WEL/4/1

What then happened about all of these reported cases of illegal child labour? The answer to this question is that, in London, in the majority of cases, not very much happened to either the child or their employer. The employer would generally be issued with a notice informing him that he had breached the bye-laws and ordering him to cease or modify the conditions of the child's employment. The parents of the child were issued with a notice informing them of the breach of the bye-laws and ordering them to ensure that the child was removed from its illegal employment. Both parents and employers might also be required to appear before the local School Attendance Committee or the division's Chief Attendance Officer to explain why the child had been employed illegally.[24] The final sanction for breaches of the employment regulations was prosecution in the Magistrate's Court. In London the chances of an employer or parent being summonsed seems to have varied from area to

[24] Unfortunately it would appear that, in London at least, the records of most of these committees have been lost. I have, as was discussed in chapter two, found only one register of cases to be heard by the Napthur St School Attendance Committee and no minutes from any London School Attendance committee.

area. In Lambeth, in the five years 1924-28 there were only 104 prosecutions for the 2724 reported infringements, that is 3.8%.[25] In the neighbouring area of Wandsworth for the period 1930-37 there were 219 prosecutions from 3008 reported offences, a prosecution rate of 7.3%.[26] In Newcastle upon Tyne, on the other hand, between March 1924 and March 1929 there were 2516 reported infringements, with 793 summonses being issued, a prosecution rate of 31.5%.

There was also a marked difference in exactly who was prosecuted. In London proceedings were generally taken against the child's parents for allowing them to work illegally. Occasionally an employer would be prosecuted but this seems to have been a rare course of action being taken only in extreme cases. In Newcastle on the other hand, the majority of summonses issued were against the children themselves. From March 1924- March 1929 some 573 children were prosecuted for breaches of the employment laws resulting in two children being remanded in custody for a week! Compared with 220 summonses being issued to parents and employers, most of whom were either simply cautioned or fined a small sum.[27]

From this it would seem clear that the chances of prosecution, even within London, depended a great deal on where the offence was committed and who reported it. In the County of London, street market inspectors, factory inspectors or the police as well as school attendance officers could report children found working illegally. The decision on the types of action to be taken depended on the attitude of the Chief Attendance Officer of each division to whom all offences were supposed to be reported. It is noticeable, in the case of Wandsworth for example, that the majority of prosecutions took place before 1935 when a new Chief Officer was appointed, after which there were just nine prosecutions in two years.

It should be remembered that the reported infringements recorded in the registers must have been just the tip of the iceberg. The policing of child employment legislation made up a very small part of the work of the attendance officers and care committee workers. While, as Tom McCarthy recalled, market inspectors were inclined to deal with the matter themselves rather than report a child.

> Once I did get caught by the council (market) Inspector and he wanted to know 'the inside of a cat's arse' as we put it when officialdom got what we considered to nosy
> "Ow old are you son?"
> "Thirteen mister" I lied as he grabbed me by the scruff of my neck.

[25] LMA EO/WEL/4/1
[26] LMA EO/WEL/4/2 Children's Employment Legislation Infringement Register 1929-37
[27] PRO HO45/13722

"Are you Now!" He replied sarcastically. "Where's yer Mum?"
"Dunno Mister," I lied as he frog marched me to where Mum and Dad were Busy Selling. He Knew Bloody well where they were!
"Ere Missis yer boy's bin sellin Outside Sainsburys an e's under age!"
"Orl right mate," replied Dad as he handed over a brown paper bag of Cherries to an old lady
*It won't appen again"[28]

In order to detect illegal child workers attendance officers had to work at the same times as the children they were trying to catch. This was often very early in the morning in the case of children delivering milk and newspapers, or late at night in the case of children employed as shop boys who, in some of the poorest areas, might work up to midnight or beyond on Friday and Saturday nights, as well as on Sunday mornings in the case of children working on market stalls and selling in the streets. These anti-social hours required that in London, at least, attendance officers be paid overtime or given time off in lieu thereof. This was often impractical for an over worked understaffed and cash strapped education department to do on a regular basis. Thus, as can be seen from the infringement registers, the attendance officers would carry out periodic 'raids 'on street markets to round up all the children they found working there, or they might go out on an early morning or evening patrol and stop every newspaper delivery boy they came across and check that they were licensed.

It was almost impossible for the attendance officers to catch more than a fraction of the children who were working illegally. They had no way, for example, of detecting children being employed in factories or warehouses unless other workers or the factory inspectors reported them. It was also impossible to detect children who were employed in home working, as outside school hours the attendance officers had no powers of entry. It had been proposed as part of the revision of child labour legislation under the 1933 Children Act to grant attendance officers powers of entry to premises where they suspected illegal child employment was taking place, but this was defeated on the grounds that it gave too much discretionary power to local authority officials. Thus an attendance officer had to get a warrant from a magistrate, and be accompanied by a police officer, before he could enter premises where he believed a child was being employed illegally.

The problem of detecting school children working in the home may explain, at least in part, the apparently massive gender gap which appears in the registers, with boys making up the vast majority of reported cases. As was shown above in both

[28] Tom McCarthy *Boysie* (London 1986) pp108-109

Lambeth and the adjoining Borough of Wandsworth, instances of girls being found working represented no more than 4% of the total number of reported cases in any one year. Why was there this massive disparity? Was it that girls didn't work? The answer to that question is plainly no; but, as Elizabeth Roberts and others point out, while boys tended to work in the public sphere delivering milk or newspapers or as shop and delivery boys or helping out on market stalls, all of which were comparatively easy to detect by a patrolling attendance officer, girls tended to work in the private sphere, either within the home minding babies, cleaning, doing laundry, making artificial flowers, running errands, or were to be found in small back street manufacturers none of which was easily detected by a patrolling attendance officer. When cases of girls working were reported, they were often not seen as infringements of the children's employment legislation, but rather dismissed as helping neighbours or as good training for girls in the domestic duties that they would be expected to perform in their adult lives.[29]

There is no simple answer to the question why did children work illegally. Firstly there was ignorance of the law. Many working-class children, their parents and even their employers did not know that there were restrictions both on the age at which children could be employed and on the kinds of work they might be permitted to perform. Most people seem to have been unaware that children were supposed to have a licence before they could work, even as a paper or milk delivery boy. Out of the thirty-one people interviewed for this study only one knew that children were supposed to be licensed before they could work and she had been an education welfare officer. Secondly there were those children who, while old enough to work, were performing tasks that were either inappropriate or prohibited by the legislation or the bye-laws. One of the most common forms of children's employment falls into this category. In some of the rougher districts it seems to have been fairly common, despite the legislation specifically banning the practice, for schoolboys like Ernie and Tom McCarthy to be employed on market stalls helping to set them up early in the morning and then restocking them throughout the day. This contravened both section 95 of the 1921 Education Act and local bye-laws which prohibited children below the age of 14, (16 in London) from street trading. It would seem then that many children, especially in poorest districts, were working many below the minimum age of 12 and

[29] Elizabeth Roberts, *A Women's Place: An Oral History of Working-class Women 1890-1940* (Oxford 1984) pp10-38

many in inappropriate, or banned occupations, often because they did not know that they were not allowed to do so. They normally worked for one of two reasons, either like Tom McCarthy to help their parents, although this practice seems to have been dying out by the inter-war period, or more often to get a little extra spending money for themselves.

What then about exemptions, did these cease after the 1921 Act? It would appear from autobiographical evidence that, if not officially sanctioning school exemption, some local authorities and more specifically some local headmasters and attendance officers did in fact turn a blind eye to older children, particularly girls, whose parents needed their help at home giving up school before their 14th birthdays. It would seem that girls were allowed to leave school early where their mother was taken ill or was absent from the home or not able to care for the family so that they could fulfil the mother's role. It is of course understandable that a head teacher might turn a blind eye to a girl, who it was expected would eventually become a housewife anyway, leaving school early to look after a home and family.

During the inter-war period the employment of school children was never a major issue of public concern, nor were the officials of the Home Office, Board of Education or Ministry of Labour taxed by the problems of child labour. For it was widely believed, both by the general public and the various government departments at the time, that the child labour problem had finally been solved thanks to the 1918 Education Act. The only times when any interest was shown in the issue by those in authority was when proposals were put forward to amend the current legislation. Thus the 1924 report into the workings of the 1918 Education Act was produced in response to a proposed Bill by the Committee on Wage Earning Children for a total ban on the employment of school aged children. The report aimed to show how well the system of control through the bye-laws and local authority licensing was working, and that the numbers of working school children had fallen significantly. They quoted figures from a variety of authorities like Newcastle, where it was claimed that the number of working children had fallen from 1578 in March 1921 to 275 in March 1924 or Leicester where the figures had fallen from 1671 in 1919 of whom 390 were under 12 to 592 by 1923. But, as Steve Cunningham points out, these figures were

obviously flawed in that they did not compare like with like.[30] The figures quoted for the numbers of children working before the 1918 Education Act were obtained by classroom surveys where the children were simply asked by their teachers who was working while the figures quoted for 1924 were the numbers of children registered to work, thus ignoring the undoubtedly large numbers of children who were working illegally.

The second report into children's employment was produced in 1931 in preparation for the 1933 Children Act; its aim was again to defend the status quo. The report's compilers returned to the twenty-five education authorities that had been surveyed in 1924. This report again ignored the instances of illegal working of school children, even going so far as to brush aside the report from Cardiff Council that said that many boys were working illegally in the city. The report showed that 80% of LEA's were satisfied that the bye-law system was working well and it also showed that 75% of LEA's who permitted working before school believed that 'little or no ill effect had resulted from the employment of children before school'.[31]

The final survey of children's employment during the inter-war period was produced in 1937. This was in support of the British Government's opposition to a proposal from the International Labour Organisation for a League of Nations convention that would have effectively banned the employment of school-aged children.

This report claimed that there were no more than about 63,000 working children out of a population of about 950,000 children aged between 12 and 14 and, that the 1936 Education Act, which was to come into force on 1st September 1939, would substantially reduce that figure and bring Britain into line with the League of Nations Convention on Child Labour in that, in theory it raised the school leaving age to 15 and raised the age at which school children could work from 12 to 13.[32] In fact the 1936 Act was so riddled with exceptions that it was effectively a dead letter a child could gain an exemption from school simply by proving that he or she had a job to go to or, if his or her parents declared that the child was needed to help at home. It was not to be until the 1944 'Butler' Education Act that effective legislation was to be introduced to raise the school leaving age to 15.

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[30] Steve Cunningham in Lavalette Michael (Ed), *A Thing of the Past: Child Workers in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (London* 1999)
[31] PRO HO45/19464 Minimum Age (Non-industrial Employment) Conventions 1932-37
[32] 26 Geo. 5/ Edw. 8

It can then be seen that, as far as officialdom was concerned, there was no longer a problem with the employment of school-aged children. The employment of children below the age of 12 had been banned and, despite evidence to the contrary, no longer existed, while the employment of school children over 12 was well controlled through a system of local bye-laws and was, anyway, gradually dying out.

5.3 Shop boys and baby-minders

So according to those in authority, most school-aged children were not employed during the inter-war period, and those few that did work did so under the supervision and within the tight controls imposed by the Local Education Authority licensing system. But, as has already been seen, this impression was false. So what kinds of jobs did London's working-class children do in this period and how did this pattern of employment compare with that of London's working-class children before the First World War?

Out of the thirty-one people asked if they had had a job before they left school seven said that they had been employed whilst still at school, and of these, five were male and only two were female. A further four said that they earned money through a range of enterprises such as running errands, 'coking' or selling firewood.

How old were these children when they started work? The average age seems to have been about 11; the youngest was 10 and the oldest 13 ½. None of those interviewed held an employment certificate, in fact, none of them even knew that they were supposed to be licensed before they could work.

So what sorts of jobs did they do? Most of the boys worked in the traditional boy jobs of fetching and carrying. Ernie's employment in a street market seems to represent the most blatant breach of the child labour laws:

> Saturday the greengrocers, Saturday was the big day, so they would like you there about seven half past six and you'd scratch around get the horse ready and then get it loaded and get it down outside where the stall was going to be positioned then your day begun there you'd help serve by restocking the place up as it run down from the horse and cart barrow... I was about; well I was carrying 1cwt of potatoes when I was 11... Working in the market it's a rough way of life because you are out in all elements and you have to change your clothes put a scarf on two jumpers double socks in the badest weather but in the warmer weather you could strip right down to just a vest and your shorts or a vest and your under whatever you wanted to do so you had it as you wanted.[33]

[33] Interview with Ernie (b.1928) p9

While Ernie might have been the extreme it was, despite the legislation, still fairly common for school-aged boys like Harry B and Fred S to work both before and after school as errand boys:

> I used to work, just for pocket money, I used to work, the chap two door down the road from me had a bag wash shop used to be before launderettes used to be bag wash and cleaning sort of dry cleaning and I used to go in there every night and just deliver used to have a bike thing used to deliver all the bag wash collect bag wash to be washed and on a Saturday virtually sort of deliver the cleaning shirts pressed and ironed and used to get half a crown a week off of him and I used to get the tips I used all right the tips it was 2d here 2d there you know wasn't bad and it did that for quite a while delivering the bag wash.[34]

Others like Peter worked as shop boys. Although this was often seen as a dead end job that would be given up when the boy left school it could, as in the case of Peter, lead to full-time employment and even a career in retail once the boy had left school:

> I used to help at the local there was a firm called Caters Grocery and Provisions and I found a job there I used to go out on the old box trikes delivering peoples orders to earn a couple of bob...my mum wanted me to go in with her brother he used to be in the Post Office he spent about 40 year in the Post Office I went up there for an interview and never got the job so I couldn't go in the Post Office so I went back to the firm who I worked for weekends and that and I got a job there.[35]

If some boys earned their pocket money working for adult employers others, like Dusty and Ernest G, were even more enterprising setting up their own small businesses, often with a group of friends, usually supplying firewood or bags of coke to their neighbours for a small fee:

> Because we lived down the side of the (Rotherhithe) tunnel and the gas works was down the end we used to go coking. Which meant you got hold of what wood you could, made a box up, go to a rubbish dump or what ever somebody threw an old pram away, put the pram wheels on, made a cart up, then went coking with your mates and you got a farthing or a ha'penny a bag whatever it was when you brought the coke back from the gas works. You also used to be able to get tarry blocks, because when they done the roads up, used to be wooden roads that they'd tar to keep en down, and what you done was cut them up, chop them up and sell them for fire wood. You volunteered to do shopping for the old lady next door or across the road, anything for ha'pennies or farthings, which, you got paid out in gratuities.[36]

As discussed above, while boys were working outside in full sight of the public and authority, girls tended to work indoors out of the public gaze:

> I used to mind a little boy used to get a couple of coppers for that then his mum wanted to go to work and she said would my mum mind minding him and she did so we used to mind him between us. We was doing artificial flowers but you work for coppers when you work indoors but it's something.[37]

[34] Interview with Fred S (b.1921) p14
[35] Interview with Peter (b.1934) note Peter gained fulltime employment after the Second World War.
[36] Interview with Dusty (b.1929) p5
[37] Interview with Dorothy (b.1927) p12

As in the pre-war First World War period some of the tasks performed by girls for money were not perceived to be forms of employment at all either by those in authority or the girls themselves.[38] Most of the women interviewed said that they did not have a job before they left school but on further questioning revealed that they used to' go baby minding' or regularly ran errands for neighbours or even worked as cleaners. In the East End two of the contributors, while saying that they did not have jobs when they were children, admitted that they acted as Sabbath Goys, lighting the fires of their Jewish neighbours on the Sabbath for a penny or two. All of the women questioned said that they helped their mothers with the housework, but none of them recognised this, nor even the regular running of errands or baby minding for neighbours, as a form of employment even though they were generally paid for both activities. Thus it would seem that girls work went unrecognised not just by the social surveyors and census takers but also by the girls themselves. While the boys recognised such tasks as fetching shopping or chopping and selling firewood as work, girls did not.

How does this picture of children's employment compare with that obtained by Anna Davin and others for the period preceding the Great War? As has been seen above, all of the jobs undertaken by children in the inter-war period had been performed by the children of the pre-war generation. In fact there seems to have been very little change in the pattern of children's employment before and after the Great War. A few jobs, particularly that of Barber's Lather boy, which was specifically proscribed under both the bye-laws and the Education Acts, seem to have died out; but generally the pattern was essentially the same with boys performing paid labour often in the public eye as messengers and errand boys, while girls worked in the domestic sphere often unseen, and unheeded, behind closed doors, their labour masked by the popular notions of helping out and suitable training for their adult responsibilities.

With the improvements in the standard of living of all sections of the working class that had resulted from the labour shortages of the First World War and, the subsequent pay rises, the motivation for most children's employment shifted from one of needing to work in order to help support themselves and their families, to one of working for pocket money or because of a desire to be grown up and enter the adult

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[38] See Anna Davin, *Growing Up Poor: Home, School and Street in London 1870-1914* (London 1996) p170-175

world. Only those children who came from the poorest backgrounds, or those like Tom McCarthy whose parents owned a business were still required to work to help support the family enterprise.[39] Of those interviewed for this study only Minnie, who began work making bonbons after school when she was thirteen and a half, handed over her earnings to her mother to help support herself. All of the other contributors who reported working while still at school kept their earnings to spend as they liked.

So what did these young wage earners spend their money on? Most like Dorothy and Fred P spent their earnings on treats like sweets, or more often going to the pictures. Harry B used his earnings to buy a new bicycle and to fund his model railway. Others, like Ernie, worked and spent their wages in ways that made them feel grown up:

> I'd go in a café and order tea toast and beans and things like that. to have er what we call feel manly about starting work and being able to say I can order that[40]

As was shown above, some teachers and parents thought that it was good for their children to work and encouraged them to get some form of paid employment believing that a job, while they were still at school, not only relieved their parents of the need to provide pocket money but also gave the child (particularly boys) a sense of responsibility and was good preparation for adult life.

When a child reached the magical age of 14 and was able to leave school and fully enter the world of work attitudes changed. Once they started full-time employment children were no longer seen as being fully dependent upon their parents, but rather were expected to contribute the bulk of their earnings to help support themselves; thus when asked what they did with their first wage packets all of the contributors replied that they brought them home and gave them to their mothers. Only one of the contributors said that his mother returned his first week's wages and told him that he could spend it as he liked. From then on however, he, like all of the others, was required to hand over the bulk of his weekly earnings.

Some better off parents like Bill's, while still insisting that their children hand over the bulk of their earnings, did not use it as an addition to the family's already

[39] McCarthy was required to help on Friday night to prepare the vegetables that were to be sold on the family's market stall on Saturday and to bring fresh produce to the stall during the day. Although technically illegal the employment of a boy to fetch fresh stock either from a nearby storage shed or as in the case of McCarthy from home was a common practice at this time. It was only if they were caught actually selling the produce that stall holders' children were liable to prosecution.

[40] Interview with Ernie (b.1928) p10

adequate income but rather, secretly saved it against the time when their child wanted to establish a home and family of their own.

5.4 Finding the right child for the right job

As a child approached the age of 14 thoughts began to turn towards leaving school and finding that all-important first job. The placing of school leavers into suitable employment was of great concern to many social reformers These fears had first been raised in the early part of the century and had been called 'the boy labour problem' when it was found that many children, and especially boys, left school and went into dead end jobs as Van and Errand Boys, Messenger and Telegraph Boys, or as Hotel Page Boys, from which they would be dismissed when they out grew their uniforms or just before they reached their sixteenth birthday.[41] It was not simply the fact that many boys drifted into dead end jobs when they left school that concerned government officials and social reformers. The way in which young people found work in the first place was another area of concern. The government had, in 1910, begun to establish a system of Juvenile Employment Bureaux to work in conjunction with the labour exchanges that had been set up for adults. The aims of these Bureaux were to place young people in employment and to monitor their progress. The problem was that even by the early 1930s less than a third of young people used the employment service to find their first job.[42] It was only when they needed to claim under the Unemployment Insurance Scheme that most young people came into contact with the officials of the bureaux, by which time it was normally too late to do anything to direct them into employment with prospects.

As part of its efforts to address the 'boy labour problem' the government also proposed to establish a system of Joint Advisory Committees (JAC), which were to be made up from volunteers from local youth groups, employers and trades unions and representative from the Ministry of Labour and the of Local Authority Education

[41] The 'boy labour problem' whereby boys were employed for a year or two in some dead end job only to be dismissed just before they reached the age of sixteen and replaced by a younger boy after which they were either to old or unwilling to take-up a place as a learner or an apprentice had been a concern of both social reformers and government before the Great War. An attempt had been made to tackle the problem by introducing compulsory day continuation school as part of the 1918 Education Act but this had failed due to a combination of opposition from employers, local authorities parents and school leavers who objected to being forced back into school. Under the 1911 Insurance Act employers were required to start paying insurance contributions once an employee reached the age of sixteen.

[42] LMAEO/WEL/1/19 Juvenile Employment and Aftercare of School Leavers

Committee.[43] The role of these JACs was to provide school leavers and young people with help and advice in finding their first job, and where necessary, subsequent jobs until they reached the age of 18. Every school leaver was to be interviewed by a committee member to determine what sort of work they might be best suited to, and what their own and their parents ambitions were .The scheme was to be on a voluntary basis funded through the Board of Trade. The Local Education Authorities had the option to opt out of the Board's system and establish their own advisory bodies that would then pass on details of school leavers to the Local Employment Bureaux.

In the case of London the LCC believed that it would be impractical and uneconomic for them to establish their own system and so chose to accept the Board funded JACs.[44] The London JAC was established in August 1910 and was composed of six members of the education committee, two employers and two trade union representatives, two members of the Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment Association (a charitable body that sought to place boys into apprenticeships), and two persons otherwise interested in child welfare and a chairman.[45] The role of this committee was to supervise the work of local voluntary JACs who were supposed to liaise with the schools and the employment bureaux in order that all school leavers might be placed into suitable employment. The success of the scheme, as might be expected since at the local level it was based on a purely voluntary system, was patchy to say the least. In areas with large active committees it had considerable success, for a few years, in placing those school leavers who chose to use them into suitable employment; but in other areas where the committee consisted of just a few members they were of very little help to most children leaving school.[46]

In London the burden of providing advice to school leavers fell mainly on the shoulders of the Employment Bureaux staff who arranged to interview every school leaver at the school before they left. The child's parents were invited to attend these interviews, although it would seem that few did.[47] By using a series of prepared

[43] Some employers sought to take advantage of these committees by using them to select suitable candidates for their own companies. There is evidence to suggest that some employers were removed from JACs when it was found that they were offering dead end or unsuitable employment to school leavers.
[44] Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem 1880-1920* (Oxford 1990) pp 201-204
[45] Ibid p.198
[46] LMA EO WEL/1/24 Juvenile Employment Bureaux
[47] Ibid.

questions and a report provided by the head teacher as to the child's character and aptitude, the interviewing officer was supposed to direct the child into the most suitable employment and provide him or her with information about their chosen career. The success of this system can be judged by the fact, as stated above, that by the beginning of the 1930s less than 30% of school leavers found employment through the Bureaux. Some officials at both the Board of Education and the Ministry of Labour were in favour of introducing a compulsory registration system for all school leavers so that they might be placed into 'suitable employment' by the staff of the employment bureau, and thus end the wasteful and inefficient hit and miss way in which most children found employment.[48]

There is some evidence to suggest that class played an important part in the sorts of occupation recommended to school leavers by the employment advisors. It would appear that children from the poorest homes were pushed towards well paid unskilled jobs with few, if any, prospects, on the grounds that their present earnings were more important to the family than their future prospects.[49] In a memorandum to Employment Bureaux Managers it was stated that they were to place children into the most suitable positions and should not be concerned about the numbers of children placed or success rates, furthermore where it was felt necessary to place a child into an unsuitable blind alley job, it should only be on the understanding that this was a temporary measure and that the child would be notified when a more suitable vacancy occurred.[50]

So if it wasn't through the employment service how did children find their first full time jobs? Was it, as has often been mooted, through the influence of family and friends or was it through local advertising in newspapers and shop windows? From both autobiographical and oral history evidence it would seem that the most common way for a child to find their first job was through a mixture of word of mouth and having a family member already working for the future employer. Of the 31 people asked how they got their first job 12 said that it was because a family member already worked there, 6 said that it was through word of mouth from friends neighbours, while only 6 said that they got their first job through the school or the employment

[48] PRO ED24 /1353 Bill to make attendance at Juvenile Employment Bureaux compulsory 1925
[49] PRO ED24/ 1352 The Problem of Juvenile Unemployment 1924/25
[50] PRO ED24/2086 Industrial Supervision of Juveniles in Employment Circular 3 (1928)

service. The most common reply to the question how did you get your first job was 'Oh my sister, brother or father worked there and they spoke to the boss'.

It was not until the 1934 Unemployment Insurance Act that 14 and 15 year olds were brought into this system. One effect of this was to remove one of the most common reasons for juveniles to be dismissed just before their 16th birthday, which was so that the employer could avoid paying insurance contributions for them. As part of the Act however, unemployed young people could be forced to attend training centres and work camps where they could supposedly be retrained, so that they might find suitable employment, although the success of these training centres was doubtful to say the least. It was noted that there was a constant turnover of trainees as newly unemployed youngsters joined the centre and others left as soon as they got a job no matter what stage they were at in the training programme. Also no attempt seems to have been made to differentiate between bright youngsters, who might have recently left school having reached or even surpassed standard VII, and those who had barely reached standard IV or V.

In London the establishment of the training centre had one interesting side effect in that it led to the employment of an additional 3 school enquiry officers to ensure that young people attended the centres; failure to do so could result in the suspension of Insurance Benefits. They were to provide some form of basic education and training to enable the young person to be able to find a suitable job. By 1937 however, with the coming of economic recovery and the beginnings of rearmament there was no longer a need for training centres and they were closed.

5.5 Conclusion

It would seem then that the problem of school children's employment did not simply disappear after the Great War. Despite the legislation, and the work of the school attendance officers who sought to ban or at least regulate school children's employment, the pattern of child labour in London continued pretty much as it had done in the years leading up to the Great War. However, thanks to the improved standard of living that had been brought about for most working people by the labour shortages of the war, and which was sustained throughout the inter-war period in London by the rise of new industries like the manufacture of new electrical components and consumer goods. The motivation for children to work had changed. It was no longer necessary for school aged children to work in order to help support themselves and their families. Instead school children continued to work, and to want

to work, in order that they might have some extra spending money or so that they might appear to be more grown up and have the opportunity of, at least in part, entering the adult world. The efforts of all of the governments of the inter-war period failed to curtail the employment of school children, and even though the impression given by the official reports of the time suggested that school children's employment was dying out in London, at least, it is clear that this was not the case.

General Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the experience of growing up in the working-class Britain of the inter-war period, and to contrast this with life for working-class children before the First World War, as described in the works of authors like Anna Davin, Stephen Humphries, Elizabeth Roberts and Ellen Ross. More specifically, the study sought to discover what it was like to grow up within the working-class in London at this time.

This work has looked at five areas of children's lives and experiences starting, as might be expected, in the home; where we looked at issues like overcrowding and sanitation as well as considering relationships between children and their parents, their grandparents and society as a whole. The thesis went on to look at the experience of schooling asking how changes in government policy; theories of education and school structure influenced working-class children's educational opportunities and experiences. It then went on to consider the provision of healthcare for working-class children focussing on the work of the School Medical and Welfare Services. The study then looked at children's play, showing how adult authority, motivated by fears that unsupervised play led to delinquency, sought to influence and control children's leisure activities and how children fought back against these often unwanted and unwarranted adult intrusions into their world. Finally we looked briefly at the employment of working-class children demonstrating how despite legislation to restrict it many working-class children continued to work legally and illegally both before and after school.

So what can we say about the lives of working-class children in inter-war London? Did their lives improve during this period? How did their experience of childhood differ from that of their parents and grandparents or for that matter how did it differ from that of their own children? In other words is that off-heard cry of '*It wasn't like that in my day*' really true?

It has been shown that there was a major housing crisis after the Great War when, due to the manpower shortage, house building and repair had come to an almost total standstill during the war. Despite the best efforts of both the London County Council (LCC) and the Local Borough Councils this housing shortage persisted

throughout the inter-war period. This was mainly due to a combination of a lack of funding from central government, which saw housing as an easy target when financial difficulties like those in 1922 and 1931 forced a retrenchment in public spending, and the fact that for much of the period the LCC's efforts were directed not towards providing new homes in the inner-city, where the majority of ordinary and poor working-class families lived, but rather to building vast new suburban housing estates for the lower-middle and upper-working-classes. Many of the contributors to this study reported that they had lived in overcrowded and often shared accommodation. It was only in the post-Second World War period, after much of the housing stock had been damaged or destroyed by bombing, that the problems of the inner-city housing shortage were fully addressed and adequate funding made available to replace the capital's old dilapidated and damaged housing stock. Although as can be seen from London and other major cities today, due in the main to bad planning decisions of the 1960s, this is one battle that no government has yet been able to completely win.

Perhaps one of the greatest technological advances of the inter-war period was the spread of electricity which began to came into working-class homes in the middle of the period, although again it was not to be until after the Second World War that electricity finally displaced gas as the main lighting medium in all working-class districts and homes. One innovation that was to have an impact on the lives of almost all children was the introduction of domestic broadcasting services in 1922, which brought news and entertainment directly into the home. By the outbreak of war in 1939 almost 95% of households in Britain had a radio set.[1] For those working-class children who lived in homes without electricity this meant the added weekly chore of taking the accumulator battery to be charged, but it also brought the bonus of entertainment in the dark evenings of winter when, at least those from respectable homes, children were expected to stay indoors rather than play out on the streets.

This brings us on to the issue of children's work within the home. Children and particularly girls were still, throughout the inter-war period, thought to be 'mother's little helpers'. Girls were expected to take an active part in the maintenance and running of the home. This was seen both as their proper role within the family structure and a good training for adult life. It has been suggested that many girls not

[1] Brian Bowers, *A History of Electric Light and Power* (Stevenage 1982) p184

only accepted this situation but felt pride in being able to help, and indeed in some instances substitute for, their mothers. There was still a marked gender difference in the sorts of tasks that boys and girls were expected to perform. Girls were generally expected to help with domestic tasks like cleaning, cooking and childcare and it was still common to see quite young girls either carrying or pushing a baby in a pram or supervising younger children as they played.[2] Boys on the other hand were expected to do the dirty and heavy jobs like cleaning the grate or the kitchen range, that was still a feature of so many homes, as well as fetching coal or coke or finding firewood.[3] The task of fetching water had by and large been eliminated with most homes now having a running water supply although again, in the poorest districts and in some shared houses, the carrying of water into the home was still a daily chore.

Attitudes of parents towards discipline and acceptable norms of behaviour do seem to have undergone some change during this period with rules being relaxed and the forms of discipline modified. As in the past in most homes it was the mother who was primarily responsible for setting the standards of behaviour and for disciplining errant children, while the father's role seems to have been as a symbol of final authority. There were, however, exceptions to this and evidence has been produced to show that in some families fathers and husbands could be extremely violent although there were greater opportunities for battered and deserted working-class women, like Alice W's mother, to gain some protection for herself and her children through legal separation if not formal divorce which remained the preserve of the middle and upper classes.

It would seem that it was now almost as likely that an errant child would be sent to bed early or forced to remain within the home as it was that they would be physically punished, although it would seem that physical punishment was, especially in the case of boys, still the most favoured method and that in many homes a cane or strap was still a prominent feature of children's lives.

At school children were still subject to physical punishment albeit much of it unofficial. A 1937 Board of Education confidential enquiry showed that the

[2] Only in families which had a predominance of boys, would an older brother normally be deputised to take charge of younger children.

[3] It was a common task for boys to visit local greengrocers and fishmongers and scrounge the old wooden boxes that their goods came in, then to chop them up and either take the resulting firewood home or more often to sell it at a penny a bundle around the neighbouring streets.

prevalence of physical punishment within the school was dependent on the type and location of the school, the class of pupils, and most critically, the character of head teacher. Physical punishment seems on the whole to have been accepted by both parents and children, many children seem to have seen getting the cane or more often the less formal punishment of the slipper or ruler, as a fact of life and something not to be mentioned at home. Only where a child was excessively or unjustly punished do parents seem to have become involved.

Most schools were still segregated after the age of seven with boys and girls having separate entrances, playgrounds and classes. In many cases boys and girls who occupied the same building were considered to be attending separate schools for administration purposes with teachers only taking classes and exercising authority over children within their own section of the building. There is evidence of the beginnings of a change in attitudes towards working-class children's education in the inter-war period but again it was not to be until after the Second World War that these changing attitudes and ideas were to filter down to the classroom, and even then, some of the older attitudes were to persist into the post-war period with the continuation of the old style teaching methods and the segregation of boys and girls.

I would argue that the division of education mirrored the divisions within society with the upper-classes being excluded from the concerns of the state system, while the small but burgeoning middle-class benefited from the expansion in secondary (grammar) provision. For most working-class boys and girls school still meant the old unreformed elementary school which they entered at the age of three or four and left at fourteen, working their way up from ground to top floor as they got older.

Although attitudes and methods remained the same at the local level nationally there does seem to have been a change. The idea that an elementary education was sufficient for all working-class children because that was all that they would require for a life of manual labour or factory work seems to have diminished. At the Board of Education for example, children between 11 and 14 who remained at elementary schools were no longer being referred to as 'working-class' but more often, as the 'elementary school type.' This change in semantics seems to have been precipitated by the 1933 Children Act and to reflect a change in official attitudes towards the education of working-class children.

There was, as has been shown, much discussion at government level about the structure and the nature of education, but it would appear that in many areas and in many schools, very few practical results came from these discussions. The Hadow Report set out the framework under which education was to operate after 1926 but, as has been shown, the change over from the single sex 'one size fits all' elementary schools that took children from five to fourteen, to a system of different types and standards of primary and post 11+ school was a slow one, which had not reached its conclusion by 1939 when many schools were closed. It was not to be until the provisions of the 1944 (Butler) Education Act were implemented that the plans first set out by the Hadow Committee in 1926 were finally brought to fruition. Education, like housing, is of course still, an area of concern today with fresh waves of reform being introduced even as I write.

If change was coming only slowly to the world of the elementary and secondary schools with many children's school lives little changed from that of their parents or grandparents, the provision of welfare facilities within the confines of the school system had undergone radical change. The introduction of compulsory medical inspection and treatment programmes had seen a marked improvement in children's health; London was at the forefront in this campaign with school doctors and nurses leading the way forward. Although here again the spectre of class discrimination can be seen in the often brisk and insensitive ways in which the children were treated.

The School Medical Service had grown out of the concerns surrounding the nation's fitness and ability to defend itself after the report into national efficiency had been published in 1904. By the start of the inter-war period, despite having suffered from an acute staff shortage during the First World War as doctors were conscripted and nurses volunteered to treat the wounded, the School Medical Service was fully established in London with a network of treatment centres attached to schools and agreements between the Education Authority and various Voluntary Hospitals, to provide a range of treatments for sick children. The School Medical Service flourished during the inter-war period as greater knowledge allowed a wider range of childhood maladies to be detected and treated. Although school medical provision improved during this period it did not prevent large numbers of children dying from what are considered today rare or minor childhood illness. Children's medical provision

outside the confines of the school system was at best patchy relying as it did on parents being able to afford treatment for their sick children.

School Welfare Services were based on a network of School Care Committees, which as we have seen, were almost exclusively staffed and run by middle-class women volunteers directed and supervised by a small core of professional women social workers. This led to problems firstly with class stereotyping, as people coming from the working-class were not thought to be suitable to join these committees, because it was felt that they did not have the required skills or authority to organise or provide these services. Secondly as the role of the middle-class women changed during this period, it became increasingly difficult to find suitable middle-class volunteers to do the work. This was particularly true in the poorest districts, where there was the most need; the Care Committees fell into decline being reduced in some areas to little more than ciphers run by the senior staff of individual schools. This allowed the paid area organiser to direct funds into providing meals for the most obviously needy children but little else.

Perhaps the organisation that underwent greatest growth during the inter-war period was the School Meals Service. Meals had been provided for London's needy school children since the 1880s and the provision of meals to necessitous children had been a statutory duty of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) since 1914. In 1922, amid complaints about the quality of the meals provided, the LCC took over the provision of school meals from the various charitable trusts that had until then been employed. After this date meals were prepared in the council's own kitchens and cookery centres for distribution to schools throughout the capital, and kitchens were included in the plans for all new schools. The provision of school meals was not an even service. After the cutbacks caused by the financial constraints imposed by the Geddes Commission the practice of providing breakfasts was halted and not re-established in London until the 1990s. While meals were provided free of charge to children deemed by the school doctor to be undernourished, in some of the poorer parts of the capital meals were also provided for paying pupils whose mothers were out at work during the day.

With greater understanding of the nutritional requirements of children and the discovery of vitamins and the importance of minerals, the government sponsored schemes to provide school children with milk. Although not entirely altruistic these

schemes aimed to improve the nutrition of children by supplying them with what was seen as nutritious food necessary to promote good development at a very low cost.[4] In addition to cheap or free milk many children in the poorer districts were given cod-liver oil and or malt as additional nutritional supplements at the discretion of the school doctor. Thus in general terms, in London at least, children of the inter-war period were better nourished than children before the Great War. Having said that, however, it should be pointed out that in some cases, particularly where parents were unemployed, free school meals were not available. This was mainly for political reasons and without doubt caused some children to suffer unnecessarily from malnutrition.

No investigation of childhood would be complete without an examination of that most important and private world of childhood: the land of play. Like their parents and grandparents before them most working-class children spent their time when not at school or helping around the home outside playing in the streets. This was one facet of childhood that had remained unchanged for generations. Working-class homes were often too small and overcrowded to provide children with any play space and so the streets offered the best and indeed the only available playgrounds for working-class children to exploit. It is not an exaggeration to say that while the main roads and thoroughfares may have belonged to the adult world of the motorcar, the omnibus, the lorry and the horse and cart, the back streets belonged to the children. Many of the games that these children played had also remained almost unchanged for generations with ring games like 'Ring-a-Ring-a Roses' and 'Oranges and Lemons' dating back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and chase games like 'What's the time Mr Wolf' still being popular with younger children. Older children were also keen to play more advanced chase games like Tin Can Copper as well as ball games like Cricket, Football and Rounders all of which took up the space of the whole street. There was one difference between the children of the pre- and post- First World War and that was in the range and types of toys that they had at their disposal. Although for many, particularly the poorest children and those from large families (who tended to be poor anyway), toys were an almost unknown luxury, for most the introduction of

[4] The first milk in school scheme was introduced in 1923 mainly as a way of encouraging people to drink more milk and reduce farm surpluses originally costing 1d for a 1/3 rd of a pint. The price was reduced to just ½d a bottle under a revised scheme introduced in 1934.

cheap tin plate toys and the use of early plastics in the manufacture of things like dolls revolutionised their play. Many children, particularly the boys, still made their own toys especially larger items like scooters pushcarts and go-carts but there was also a thriving market in second-hand toys particularly for larger items like dolls houses and bicycles.

There was one key difference between the recreational activities of the children of the pre- and post- First World War periods and that was the influence of the new medium of film. During the inter-war period most children went to the cinema; indeed as has been shown, cinemas established special children's Saturday matinees to encourage them in. This had some marked effects on children's play as they assumed the characters they had seen on the screen and sought to re-enact the scenes from their favourite films.

Official attitudes towards children's street play seem to have changed during the period with a decline in the number of prosecutions for playing games in the street, although again autobiographical and oral testimony suggests that unofficial action on the part of the patrolling police officer to curb youthful exuberance was not uncommon.[5] At the start of the period the various youth organisations were in decline due to their being seen as a training ground for the armed forces but most soon recovered with the Boys' Brigade, for example, seeing its membership peak in 1933 as it celebrated its golden jubilee. This did not mean that these organisations were any more successful in recruiting members from the lower end of the working class than they had been in the pre-war days. Indeed, as was shown, in some areas membership of such organisations could be a distinct liability. It seems that on the whole public fears about the activities of adolescent street gangs diminished at this time, but while public fears were allayed, in official circles there was still considerable concern about the activities of the young and in particular the young unemployed. Several schemes were established to combat the twin problems of youth unemployment and delinquency including the reactivation of the Board of Education's Juvenile Organisation Committee in 1924, and the creation of unemployment training centres for boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 18 where they could learn useful skills that might help them gain employment and incidentally keep them off the streets.

[5] See Interview with Ernest G and Tom McCarthy *Boysie*

It is perhaps in the area of employment that some of the greatest differences between the pre- and post- First World War children can be seen. (This difference was less marked in London than in other parts of the country). Before the war it had been common for children to leave school at twelve or thirteen to enter full-time employment. After the provisions of the 1918 and 1921 Education Acts were finally implemented all children were required to stay on at school until the end of term in which their fourteenth birthday fell. But these Acts did not simply raise the school leaving age they also placed new and tighter restrictions on the employment of school-aged children, raising the minimum age at which a child could be employed from 10 to 12 and strictly limiting the number of hours that children could work and the nature of the tasks in which they could be employed. Having established these controls the officials of the Board of Education (BoE) and the Ministry of Labour were satisfied that they had curbed child employment. It has been shown how ineffective these restrictions were and how officials ignored evidence, which suggested their inefficiency. It has also been shown that children were encouraged both by local employers and their parents to work. This was particularly true of boys and amongst children living in the poorest districts. There does seem to have been one very marked change from the pre-war era and that was in the reasons why children were encouraged to work. Before the war many families relied on the extra income that could be gained by a child going out to work when not at school. After the war, which had seen a marked real terms rise in wages, and consequently family income levels, so that, except in the poorest families, the earnings of school-aged children were no longer considered to be vital to a family's well being. Instead children, and particularly boys, were encouraged to work because it was felt that it provided discipline and gave them a sense of responsibility. From the children's point of view working was not only seen as grown up but as a good way to gain some much needed extra spending money.

There have been a number of themes running throughout this study; including that of the often-stormy relationships and power struggles both between various departments of government and between central and local government, which had begun in the 19th century and were to continue throughout the inter-war period and beyond. These conflicts were particularly evident in the areas of education, social welfare and children's employment and were highlighted in 'the battle of the school

leaving age'. This saw many LEAs attempting to circumvent the legislation that required all children to stay at school until the end of the term in which they reached the age of 14, by the creation of administrative terms and after 'turf war' between the BoE and the Ministry of Labour the instruction to factory inspectors to 'turn a blind eye' to any 14 year olds they found working before they were due to leave school.[6] These conflicts were also highlighted by the attempt of LEAs to gain powers under the 1936 Education Act to provide free clothing for necessitous children, which was opposed by both the BoE and the Treasury on the grounds that it would put too much power into the hands of local officials.

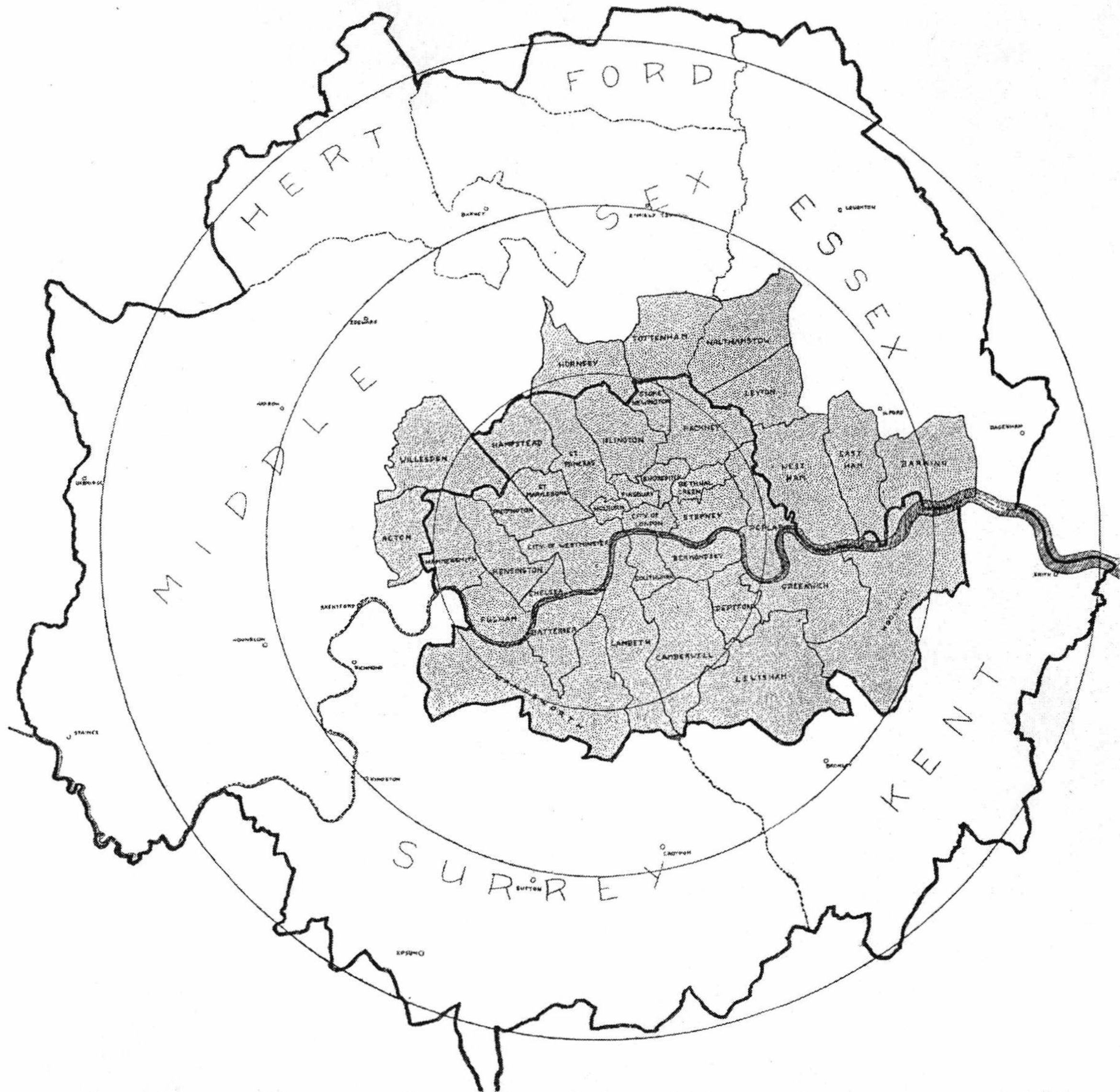
The second theme of this study has been that of continuity and change and it is hoped that this study has made some small contribution to the debate surrounding the impact of the First World War on British society. It would seem from this study that rather than acting as a catalyst for change as suggested by historians like Arthur Marwick, in many areas, particularly social welfare and education, if anything the war acted as a brake on a process that had begun at the turn of the century, if not before. There had, for example, been plans for the abolition of half-time working and the introduction of a uniform minimum school leaving age of 14, while the provision of school meals and medical services had both been made statutory duties before the war. In London school welfare services in the shape of the children's care committees had been established at the beginning of the century. Founded on the voluntary principle so favoured by the Victorians they were continue to rely on a vast army unpaid middle class women throughout the inter-war years. In state funded education the two tier system of elementary and selective secondary schools was to persist throughout the period despite plans for change it was not to be until after the Second World War that radical changes were to take place in the field of education.

The third theme that can be found in this work is one which I have until now been reluctant to openly declare I would argue that, it has become clear that there existed a dichotomy between what those in authority were trying to achieve, and believed they were achieving, and what was actually happening to working-class children. For the historian this has major implications because there is a marked difference between the evidence obtained from the official written record, be it from

[6] See pp 214-215

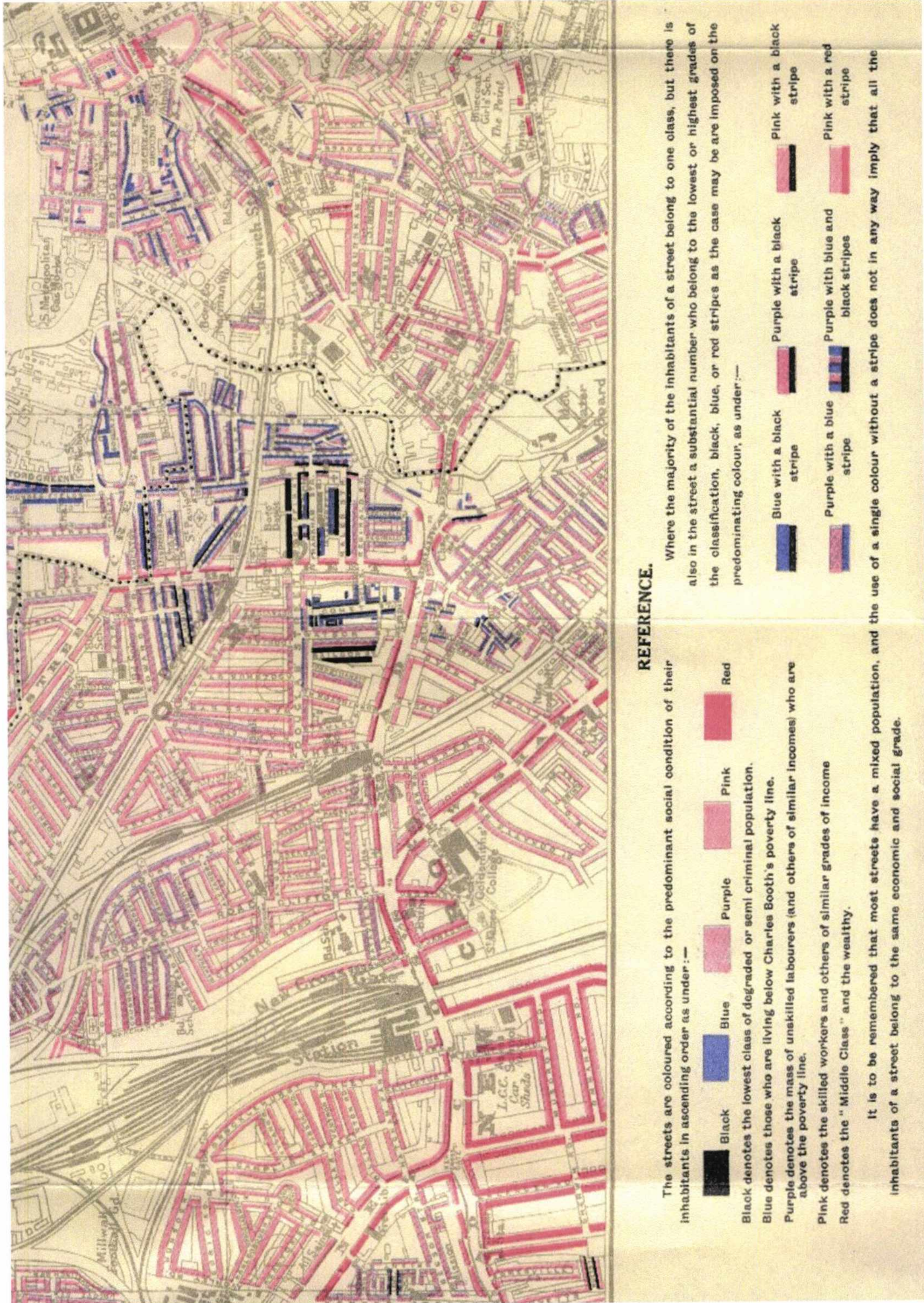
government, local authority or charitable organisations records, and the evidence obtained from oral and autobiographical testimony. As was stated above if one were to rely solely on the written record one would gain the impression that there had been radical changes and improvements in the lives of working-class children with in the majority of cases an ending of child labour, improvement in education provision, better housing and above all through the work of the schools medical, welfare and meals services, better nutrition and medical care. If on the other hand one contrasts this with the view gained from oral and autobiographical testimony it would seem that conditions for many if not most working-class children were little changed from that of the children of the pre-war Edwardian era. In some areas of children's lives problems seem simply to have been hidden. We have seen that according to the written record needy children were now supplied with free milk and meals but it has also been suggested by the oral testimony that many needy children slipped through the net or were in fact barred from receiving free meals either because of the unemployment legislation or through family pride. This dichotomy between the written record and the recollections of some of those affected, which has been a constant theme throughout this thesis, shows, I would argue, that while both government officials and middle-class welfare workers were devoting considerable amounts of both time and energy to schemes for improvement much of that effort had little impact on the lives of working-class children.

SKETCH MAP
SHOWING GREATER LONDON,
THE COUNTY OF LONDON
AND THE NEW SURVEY AREA.



Outer thick line—Greater London boundary.
Inner thick line—County of London boundary.
Shaded portion—New Survey Area.
Circles—Radii of 5, 10 and 15 miles

Map 2
Example of New Survey of London Poverty Map



Taken from Volume IV Maps I, Map 2 Inner South East

Appendix 1
Oral History Project Questionnaire
Section One

(1a) When and where were you born?

(1b) Where was the first home that you can remember living in what was it like?

(1c) How long did you live there?

(1d) How often did you move? What was that like?

(1e) What was your second home like?

(1f) Did you like it there?

(1g) Was it better or worse than your previous home?

(1h) Did the home in which you spent most of your childhood have a bathroom? If not how did you keep clean?

(1J) Did you have an inside toilet?

(1k) What did you use for lighting?

(1l) What did you use for heating?

(1m) What sort of cooking facilities did you have?

(1n) How many rooms did you have?

Section Two

(2a) How many brothers and sisters did you have?

(2b) Where did you fit into the family?

(2c) How did you get on with your brothers?

(2d) How did you get on with your sisters?

(2e) While we are talking about your family tell me about your mother what was she like?

(2f) Did your mother go to work while you were a child?

(2g) If yes what did she do?

(2h) How did you get on with her?

(2i) Do you have any special memories of her?

(2j) What about your father what was he like?

(2k) What did he do for a living?

(2L) How did you get on with him?

(2m) Do you have any special memories of you father?

Section Three

(3A) Now I want to ask you about meal times did you have regular fixed meal times?

(3b) Did everybody sit down together to eat?

(3c) Did you all have the same meal?

(3d) Can you describe a typical weekday meal?

(3e) Now what about Sundays would you have some thing different for Sunday dinner? If yes what would you have?

(3f) What about bedtimes did you have a regular fixed bedtime?

(3g) Where did you sleep?

(3h) Did you have your own room / bed?

(3j) What was that like?

(3k) Did you have to do jobs around the house?

(3L) If yes what sorts of things were you expected to do?

(3m) If no did your brothers/ sisters have to do jobs around the house?

(3n) How did you feel about this?

(3p) Did you have to look after younger brothers/sisters?

(3Q) If yes what was that like?

Section Four

(4a) Can you describe yourself aged about ten?

(4b) What did you look like?

(4c) What would you have been wearing?

(4d) Where did your clothes come from?

(4e) Were they new or second hand?

(4f) How often did you have new clothes (that's clothes new to you)?

(4g) Did you normally wear shoes or boots?

(4h) Can you describe them?

(4j) Were they new or second-hand?

(4k) How often did you have new shoes/boots?

(4l) How was your hair cut what sort of style was it?

(4m) Who cut your hair?

(4n) Males only how old were you when you started wearing long trousers?

Section Five

(4a) Where did you play?

(4b) What sorts of games did you play? Can you describe a favourite game?

(4c) What sorts of toys did you have?

(4d) Were they new or second-hand?

(4e) Did you make your own toys can you tell me something about that?

(4f) Did you have a radio at home? If yes can you remember what you listened to?

(4g) Did you go to the cinema?

(4h) If yes how often would you go and what sort of things would you see?

(4i) Did you get regular pocket money? If yes how much and who from?

(4k) If no how would you get money?

(4l) What sort of thing would you spend your money on?

Section Six

(6a) Where did you go to school?

(6b) Do you remember starting school? How old were you?

(6c) What is your earliest memory of school?

(6d) Can you remember your first teacher?

(6e) What sorts of lessons did you have? Did you have a favourite subject?

(6f) Did you have a favourite teacher?

(6g) If yes what made this teacher special?

(6h) Did you have a least favourite teacher?

(6i) If yes why did you dislike this particular teacher?

(6j) Did you take any exams at school?

(6k) If yes tell me about them. If no do you remember anybody else in your school taking exams like the scholarship?

(6l) Do you remember the school board man? What was he like?

(6m) Did you ever hop the wag (truant)? If yes what happened? If not why not?

(6N) Did you have school milk/ dinners if yes can you tell me about that?

(6p) Do you remember the care committee ladies? If yes what were they like?

Section Seven

(7a) Do you remember visits from the school nurse? What happened when she visited?

(7b) Do you remember seeing the school doctor? What was that like?

(7c) What about the school dentist do you remember seeing a dentist at school?

(7d) Did you ever go to the school clinic? If yes what was that like?

(7e) What happened if you weren't well at home? Did you go to the doctors what was that like?

(7f) Did you ever have to go into hospital as a child? If yes why and can you tell me what that was like?

Section Eight

(8A) Did you have a job before you left school?

(8b) If yes what did you do and how many hours did you work?

(8c) How old were you? Did you get an employment certificate?

(8d) How much did you get paid and what did you do with the money?

(8e) How old were you when you left school?

(8f) What was your first full time (proper) job?

(8g) How did you get it? Did you go to the labour exchange? What was that like?

(8h) Can you remember how much you got paid and what you did with your first pay packet?

(8I) Did anybody play any tricks on you when you started work?

Section Nine

(9a) Lets talk about something more enjoyable. Did you go away on holidays?

(9b) If yes where would you go?

(9c) How long would you be away from home?

(9d) Would the whole family go away together?

(9e) Can you remember anything special about your holidays?

(9f) Were you a member of any youth organisation or clubs like the scouts/guides? If yes which?

(9g) What sorts of things would you do?

(9h) Did you have a uniform?

(9i) Did you go away on trips to camp for example?

(9j) Do you remember the man/woman in charge? What were they like?

(9k) Did you like going or were you made to go?

(9l) Did you take part in competitive sports?

(9m) Were you a member of any church?

(9n) Did your parents go to church?

(9p) Did you go to Sunday school? What was that like?

(9Q) Did you like going or were you forced to go?

Section Ten

(10A) Finally I would like to ask you about what happened when you were naughty?

(10b) What sorts of things would you get into trouble for at home?

(10c) What would happen when you were naughty? Were you ever hit? If so with what and by whom?

(10d) What did you feel about your punishments at home?

(10e) Did you ever get into trouble at school?

(10f) What sorts of things would you get into trouble for?

(10g) How were you punished at school?

(10h) Can you describe being punished at school?

(10j) How did you feel about this?

(10k) Did you ever get into any more serious trouble with the police?

(10l) Can you tell me what happened?

Appendix 2
Selected wage rates for adult male workers taken from the New Survey of London

Occupation	Minimum	Maximum
London General Bus driver	60s	80s
London General Bus Conductor	79s 6d	
LCC Tramway Driver		72s
LCC Tramway Conductor		72s
Driver contractor (horse drawn)	55s	66s
Driver Contractor (steam wagon)	72s	
Van guard	18s	22s
Railway Engine Driver	86s 6d	97s 6d
Fireman	57s	72s
Guard	50s	65s
Porter (all grades)	40s 11d	54s 2d
Ticket Collector	54s	58s
Signalman		52s
Engine cleaners	46s 7d	49s
Labourers	48s	50s
Bricklayers	75s 6d	
Carpenters & Joiners	75s 6d	
Masons	78s 10d	
Painters & Decorators	71s 6d	
Plumbers	75s 6d	
General Labourers	56s 10d	
Public Works Labourers	55s	
Paviors and Kerb Fixers	75s 2d	
Street Masons	71s 6d	
Fitters	62s 11d	
Sheet metal workers	62s 11d	
Toolmakers	68s 9d	
Platers (Boiler makers)	66s	
Riviters (Boiler makers)	59s	
Labourers	45s 3 ½ d	
Cabinet makers (Machine)	82s 3d	
Upholsterer	82s 3d	
French polisher	80s 3d	
Bespoke Tailor	82s 6d	
Ready-made Tailor	78s 8d	
Tailors Cutters	68s	
Day labourer (Docks)	12s per day	
Stevedores	13s 6d per day	
Port authority Labourers	66s	
Baker Table hand	60s	
Baker Second hand	62s	68s
Bakers foreman	68s	76s
Dairy Roundsman (milkman)	56s	80s
Dairy Shop assistant	56s	
Co-operative stores assistant	66s	
Grocery assistant	65s 6d	
Butcher	70s	80s
Greengrocery assistant	60s	80s
Compositor (Machine Litho)	96s	
Reader	94s	
Printer warehouse porter	71s	

Appendix 3

Contributors Biographical Details

The people taking part in this study came from a range of areas and backgrounds here are some brief biographical details of the contributors to this thesis:

Amy (Soho day care centre)
Born 1908 in Maidenhead brought up in Chelsea she had 10 or 11 brothers and sisters (she could not remember exactly how many). Her father was a metropolitan police office her mother did not work. She attended the local council elementary school from the age of 5 to 14 when she left to go into service.

Alice S (St Jude's club)
Born 1908 in Queen's park where she was brought up. She had four brothers and one sister. Her father was a furniture finisher and her mother a cook at private functions. She attended the local council elementary school; she left at the age of 14 to go into service.

Alice W (Soho day care centre)
Born 1915 in St John's Wood where she was brought up. Her father was killed in the First World War she had a brother and sister who went to live with relatives when her mother remarried. She had two half sisters and a half brother. Her stepfather was a violent drunkard who did not work. Her mother did a variety of part-time jobs to support the family. Alice attended the local elementary school from the age of 3 to 14 when she left to become a clerk in food wholesalers.

Bill (Russia lane day centre)
Born 1926 in Stepney where he was brought up. He had one brother and one sister. Her father was a lorry driver and her mother worked in the rag trade. He attended an elementary school until the age of 11 when having passed the 11 plus he went on to a secondary school, which he left aged 14 to go into the construction industry.

Dorothy (Poplar day care centre)
Born 1927 in Whitechapel the family moved to Millwall where they lived until she was 8 when after the death of her brother they moved to Old Ford. Her Father who had been wounded in WWI worked as a builder's labourer her mother did not work. She had two brothers and two sisters and attended the various council elementary schools from the age of 5 to 14 when she left to start work as cotton operative having been evacuated to Lancashire.

Dusty (Poplar Day Care Centre)
Born 1929 in Bermondsey where he was brought up His father was a carpenter and his mother a machinist he had one older brother. He attended a council junior school until the outbreak of War in 1939 after which his education was disrupted he left school at 14 to become a junior laboratory technician.

Emily (Poplar day care centre)
Born 1924 in Poplar where she was brought up. Her father was bituermastic enameller her mother did not work she had five brothers and five sisters. She attended a council elementary school from 4 to 14 when she started work at Stepney Laundry.

Ernie (St Jude's club)
Born 1928 in Paddington where he was brought up until the age of nine when his mother died after which he was moved from place to place as he stayed with various relatives. His father was an electrical tester. He attended a variety of council junior and elementary schools and due to the disruption caused by the war he effectively left at the age of 11 and began working illegally in the street markets.

Ernest G (Own home)
Born 1927 in Walworth where he was brought up. His father was a self-employed builder his mother a butcher he had two younger sisters. He attended a range of council junior and elementary schools from the age of 5 to 14 his education was like so many others disrupted by the war and he effectively left school at 11. He started work making ammunition boxes at the age of 14.

Elizabeth W (Aspen Court day care centre)
Born 1925 in Whitechapel where she was brought up. Her father had been gassed in WWI and was unemployed for the early part of her childhood eventually finding work with the local authority as a gardener. Her mother worked as a cleaner. She had an older brother who was disabled and one sister. She attended a council elementary school from the age of 3 to 14 when she left to work for a company making bank notes.

Fred M (Russia Lane day care centre)
Born 1928 Bethnal Green where he was brought up. His father was a hod carrier and his mother a tailor. He had two brothers and one sister. He attended a council elementary school and was a persistent truant. His first job was a bike messenger.

Fred P (St Jude's club)
Born 1917 in Kensal Town where he was brought up. His father was a bus driver and his mother a cleaner and cook for private functions. He had one sister but also four half sibling who did not live with him. He attended the local council elementary school from 5 to almost 15 when he left to work as a paperhangers paste boy.

Fred S (St Jude's club)
Born 1921 Kensal Rise where he was brought up. His father was a haulage contractor his mother did not work he had five sisters and one brother. He attended a council elementary school from 5 to 11 then moved on to a central school he left school at the age of 14 to work as a capstan lathe operator.

George (Poplar day care centre)
Born 1920 Stepney where he was brought up. His father a dustman his mother who was deaf did not work. He had four sisters and one brother. He attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 to 14 when he left school he went to work as a coal heaver.

Gwen (Soho day care centre)
Born 1935 in Bermondsey where she lived until the start of the war in 1939 when the family moved to Marylebone Her father was a carpenter and her mother a dressmaker. She had one younger sister. She attended a council primary school from 5 to 11 moving on to a secondary modern she left school at 16 ½ to become a bookkeeper.

Harry B (Own home)
Born 1927 in Camden Town where he lived until the age of 7 when the Family moved to Brixton where he spent the rest of his childhood. His father was a porter's foreman his mother did not work. He had one brother who was killed in a road accident at the age of five. He attended various council elementary a junior school from the age of 5 to 11 he then went to a new style secondary modem he passed the 11+ at the age of thirteen but was prevented from taking up a place at grammar school by the declaration of war he left school at 14 to become an apprentice motor mechanic.

Irene (Aspen Court day care centre)
Born 1928 in Canning town where she lived until she was 8 the family then moved to West Ham. Her father was a casual dockworker and her mother a shop assistant she had one sister. She attended a council junior school from 5 to 11 then moved on to a new style secondary modern, she left school at 14 to work in a leather cloth factory.

Margaret B (Poplar day care centre)
Born 1903 in Stepney where she was brought up. Her father was a dock labourer her mother did not work she had five brothers and one sister. She attended a Catholic elementary school up to the age of 14 when she left to work in a cigarette factory.

Margaret N (Poplar day care centre)[1]
Born c1930 in Poplar as part of an extended family she moved to Loughton in Essex at the age of about 13 because of the war. Her father was a professional solder her mother worked (employment unknown) She had one brother 11 years younger than her and after his father was killed in North Africa one adopted brother. She attended a council elementary school and left school at 14.

Marion (Aspen Way day care centre)
Born 1923 in Bethnal Green where she was brought up. Her father was a dock labourer her mother did not work. She had five sisters and one brother. She attended a Catholic elementary school from the age of 4 to 14 when she left to become a machinist.

[1] In this interview the contributor talked freely with very little prompting from the interviewer and so there are some gaps in the information gained.

Minnie (Russia Lane day care centre)
Born c1905 in Whitechapel where she lived until the age of 12 when the family moved to Bethnal Green. Her father worked 'on the railway' her mother did not work she had three brothers and four sisters. She attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 to 14 when she left to work in box making factory.

Peter (Russia Lane day care centre)
Born 1934 in Mile End where his mother who worked as a cleaner brought him up. (His parents separated when he was very young) He attended a council junior school from the age of 4 and moved on to a secondary modern at the age of 11 he left school at 14 and when to work fulltime at the grocers where he had been working part time before leaving school

Rita (Poplar day care centre)
Born 1928 in Whitechapel brought up in a Jewish family in Mile End. The contributor requested that no further details be made available.

Rosina (Russia Lane day care centre)
Born 1916 in Mile End where she was brought up. Her father was a Bar steward in a billiard hall her mother did not work. She had five sisters and one brother. She attended a council elementary school from the age of about 6 to 14 when she left to become a dressmaker.

Sam (Poplar day care centre)
Born 1916 in Stepney where he was brought up. His father was steam wagon driver his mother worked as a cook and cleaner. He had two sisters and one brother. He attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 to 14 when he left to work in a shoe factory.

Violet. (Soho day care centre)
Born 1925 in North Kensington where she was brought up. Her father was a builder's labourer her mother did not work. She had three sisters and two brothers. She attended various council elementary schools but due to illness did not start school until the age of 8 she left school at 14 to work as a packer.

The author conducted the following interviews in and around Battersea in1996 for another project

Derrick S (interviewed 19-06-96)
Born 1927 Dalston where his widowed mother who was a furrier brought him up. He was an only child. He attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 to 11 before going on to a grammar school as a fee-paying pupil. He left school at 18 to go into the fur trade.

James B (interviewed 01-08-96)
Born 1915 in Battersea where he was brought up. His father was killed in the First World War his mother as a tailor he had three brothers and one sister. He attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 to 14 when he left to become an apprentice gas fitter.

Joan H (Interviewed 27-06-96)
Born 1930 in Battersea where her grandparents brought her up after her mother deserted the family. Her father was stoker she had four brothers and four sisters. She attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 she left school at 14 to work in a boot polish factory.

Peter C (interviewed 19-06-96)
Born 1920 in Pool Dorset but was adopted by a family living in Battersea. His adopted father was a painter and decorator his adopted mother was a cook. He was brought up as an only child and attended a range of local elementary schools from the age of 5 he left at 14 to work in an engineering factory.

Violet M (Interviewed 24-06-96)
Born 1922 in Battersea where she was brought up. Her father was a hot water fitter her mother who had eight children from a previous marriage did not work. Violet was brought up as an only child her half brothers and sisters having been taken into care. She attended a council elementary school from the age of 5 she left school at 14 to work in a chocolate factory.

Six interviews were conducted but later excluded from this thesis

Eric (Soho day care centre)
Born 1927 in Harrow Middlesex father an accountant went to Harrow school

Frankie (Covent garden day centre)
Born 1918 East Ham father superintendent of the Jewish cemetery

Henry (Aspen Court day care centre)
Born 1925 in Camden Town tape intelligible

James (Paddington drop in centre)
Born and brought up in Scotland

Mary (Paddington drop in centre)
Interview abandoned

Rose (Covent Garden day centre)
No information total tape failure

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